

MIRIAM

 LUCAS 

CANON SHEEHAN



'tis a very proud thing to Be Irish



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MIRIAM LUCAS

CANON SHEEHAN'S WORKS.

FICTION.

- Student Life:* GEOFFREY AUSTIN, STUDENT
THE TRIUMPH OF FAILURE.
- Clerical Life:* MY NEW CURATE.
LUKE DELMEGE.
THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY.
- Irish Rural Life:* GLENANAAR.
LISHEEN.
MIRIAM LUCAS.
THE GRAVES AT KILMORNA (*not yet published*).
- Historical:* THE QUEEN'S FILLET.
- Short Stories:* A SPOILED PRIEST AND OTHER STORIES.

MISCELLANEOUS.

- Literary:* EARLY ESSAYS AND LECTURES.
UNDER THE CEDARS AND THE STARS.
PARERGA.
THE INTELLECTUALS.
- Drama:* LOST ANGEL OF A RUINED PARADISE.
- Poems:* CITHARA MEA.
- Sermons:* MARLÆ CORONA.

MIRIAM LUCAS

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Author of
"My New Curate," "Luke Delmege,"
"The Blindness of Dr. Gray," "The Queen's Fillet," etc.

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BOOK I

MIRIAM LUCAS

BOOK I

I

A SLEEPY HOLLOW

ON a very hot afternoon in the early summer of 188—two young Trinity students rode leisurely along the precipitous highway that runs from Cuskinny Bay in the Great Island to that particularly romantic and picturesque spot, known as the East Ferry. They had passed through Cuskinny demesne, and on the borders of the little bay had held an academical discussion about the advisability of bathing there. Hugh Ireton, the elder of the two, who was the laziest, but most popular man in his college, was emphatically for stopping and plunging in, especially as the tide was just on the ebb, and the huge boulders that obstruct the bay were not visible. Arthur Ashley voted a direct negative.

"I came out for a plunge in the briny," he said. "'Twas for that we borrowed our gallant steeds; but I have a decided objection to an amalgam of fresh and salt water. I take my liquor neat, externally as well as internally."

And Hugh Ireton, too lazy to offer resistance to the superior will, acquiesced, and they rode on in silence. When they came opposite Redington House, Ireton again pointed to the clear blue waves beneath, that were just then asleep under the sun, with only a thin collar of foam to mark that they were living. Ashley shook his head.

"The same objection holds here," he said. "I shall have no estuary water, nor diluted seawater today. I must have the Atlantic, or nothing."

Hugh Ireton reined in his horse, and looked aghast at his companion.

"That means crossing the Ferry," he said slowly.

"By all means, or two or three, if necessary. We have the day to ourselves, dinner at seven; we might as well be here as anywhere else, and —

Twopence to pay!

Twopence to pay!

Who knows, old Socrates?"

"All right," said the fatalist.

They were soon at the Ferry, and beckoned for the pontoon, which was at the other side.

"By Jove! 'tis a pretty place," said Ashley, casting his eyes up and down the sloping banks and the rich verdant vegetation, whose shadows, cast deep into the water, now trembled beneath the outward rush of the tide. The Mother-sea, exhausted by the suction of the Ocean outside, was calling for supplies; and all her tributaries were rushing furiously to her relief.

"It is a pretty place," said Hugh Ireton. "If one had only a thousand a year, and one of these mansions here —"

"He would die of inanition," said his companion.

"No, 'twould be paradise."

"Wouldn't you take that little parsonage and that Church over the way?" said Ashley.

"On a hundred a year? No. Mark how the times have changed, Ashley. Here in this hollow cave the poor hunted Papists heard their Mass in the old times; and there is the spick span bijou church beyond. Would you rather worship there, or here?"

"Ireton, let religion alone, my boy, and keep to the saw and the scalpel. Here we are! Roger, old man, steady! *'Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte!'* old man!"

"How we all dread that first step," said Ireton, "especially when our feet ring hollow on the arena."

They crossed safely, disembarked, and cantered leisurely along the white road that skirted Rostellan demesne.

Then, rapidly turning to the right, they asked directions and made in a straight line for the sea.

It was now far into the afternoon; but the sun was high in the heavens and beat down on road and hedge and field in an atmosphere that quivered in its intensity. And when the two men, at a sudden turn of the road, came face to face with the far-stretching, unbroken deep, they had to pull their broad hats deeper down to shade their eyes from the intolerable splendour. Their horses stepped daintily over rough gravel and pebbles, then their feet fell softly on the warm sand, and they were in the village street. It consisted but of one row of white-washed cabins bounded on the southern side by a seawall that now was blinding in its new coat of limewash. There was no sound or sign of life in the village. The doors were all wide open, but apparently no one dwelt in the houses.

"No danger of being observed here," said Ashley, "but what the mischief shall we do with our horses?"

"Hitch on to one of these old boats," said Ireton. "Here are the fishing cables."

He pulled strongly, and woke to life a venerable old seaman, who was sleeping calmly in the shelter of the boats. He rose lazily, lazily drew himself together, and stared at the intruders.

"Hello, old salt," said Ashley, "we disturbed you! Is there any place in this Sleepy Hollow where we could get a bite, or a drink for our nags?"

James Carroll resented this familiarity for two reasons. First, because "old salt" was an irreverent expression to a man who had spent half his life before the mast in Her Majesty's Navy, and had several medals hanging up near the altar of the Blessed Virgin in his little bedroom at home. And second, because "Sleepy Hollow" was an untoward epithet for the cleanest, tidiest, healthiest little fishing hamlet in Ireland. He took up in silence the tar-brush with which he was coating the little fishing smacks that, with their broad, black backs were now

glistening in the hot sun, and, after a few moments' reflection, during which he was gathering his thoughts and concentrating them in a deadly form, he sent forth the missile.

"I'd give you one advice, young man, and maybe you'd thank me for it when you have grey hairs. There are two things that carry a man safe through life — the Grace of God, an' a civil tongue."

He bent down to his work again; but after a moment he thought he could improve on the aphorism.

"An' a civil tongue is no load," he said.

Ashley looked at his companion and laughed.

"Stranded, by Jove!" said he.

Hugh Ireton, more diplomatic, because more kind, said nothing; but running his horse's bridle under his arm, he took out his tobacco pouch and filled his pipe. Then, without offering it to Ashley, he said to the old mariner: —

"You have got your cutty about you?"

The old man hesitated for a moment between wounded pride and the temptation. But it was only for a moment. The flesh conquered the spirit; and, like most mortals, he yielded. He put his pride in his pocket and took out his pipe. He filled it well from the proffered pouch, and taking a light from the young man, he sat and smoked leisurely. When his anger, excited by the young man's irreverence, had calmed down, he said apologetically: —

"Ye'll pardon me, young gentlemine, for the liberty; but we, old navy men, were always addressed respectful-like by our officers. And they had to mind their P's and Q's themselves, I tell ye. If the Lieutenant on watch had only to tell the Cap'n that the cook was drunk, he had to tech his cap and say: — 'I've the 'anner to report the cook is drunk, Sir!' and if the Cap'n replied: — 'You may go to the devil, Sir!' the lieutenant had to tech his cap again, and say, respectful-like: — 'Ay, ay, Sir!' That was manners for you. But this is rare tobacco!"

"May I be permitted, Sir, to join the pow-wow, Sir, with this?" said Ashley, holding out a capacious flask.

"Ay, ay, Sir," said Ireton. "But that's new whiskey, Ashley. Is there any fresh water around here?" he asked, addressing the old man.

"Ay, ay, Sir," said the latter, entering into the fun with twinkling eyes, and the expectation of better things.

He took them up to his little cottage; and a very neat, clean, well-kept cottage it was. For its tutelar deity was Anstie, James Carroll's only daughter, "the light of his life and the pulse of his heart." It was her pretty presence threw sunshine wherever she cast a shadow; and it was her swift, deft fingers that made the whole place a "moral" of neatness and beauty. Of course it was only a sailor's cabin; but the sailor's lass kept it as sweet as the stateroom in a British man-of-war. She was busy when her father entered with his guests, and did not know whether to smile or frown, to be angry or glad. She had had no notice, which is always a serious thing for a housekeeper. And then — well, she would have liked to have had time to put on that pink blouse, which as yet she had only worn once, at Sunday's Mass. However, she contrived to look agreeable at last, as her father said: —

"Here, lass, are two gintlemin stranded on our coast. Their ships wore badly, and they are thrown on our hospitality."

He called promptly for cold water, which made Anstie stare and frown. Cold water! What an idea of hospitality.

"Perhaps the gentlemen would like something better?" she said. And the old mariner winked at his seamates. Anstie was not in the secret.

"If your good daughter," said Ireton, "would take the trouble to get us a good cup of tea, and a morsel of bread — I see that sweet loaf over there is her handiwork, and I hate baker's bread — we could run down and have our bath. But, to be candid, we are more solicitous for our horses than for ourselves; for they are not our own."

James Carroll did not quite like this. He hated tea; and he thought he was going to be cheated. But Anstie assumed the mistress at once, and blushing to the roots of her thick brown hair, and through a regular crop of freckles, she said:—

“Coppal can run up to the Great House with the horses and get a feed for them. And I’ll have the tea ready when the gentlemen come back.”

She went to the door, and shouted with that familiar *heaveyo!* which is the Irish equivalent of the *Coo-ee* of the bush:—

“Coppal! Coppa-a-a-a-al!”

“We-e-e-el?” came from far up the country road. And presently as strange a figure as the Pied Piper of Hamelin came running down the white road towards the village. His head, quite bare, was protected from the hot sun by an enormous shock of hair, originally black, now white as a miller’s from dust. His breast, unprotected by vest or shirt, was bronzed and tanned like leather; his strong feet were bare, and horned and white; and his garments, whose outer edges floated on the air as he ran, had been made for him, or someone else, many years ago. He ran up, not breathless, for his strong lungs were like leather, and, touching his hat to the two gentlemen, he scowled at Anstie, whom he cordially hated, and said under his teeth:—

“Go to te tivil!”

Then, with a kind of animal instinct, he turned around, and whinnying with admiration, he stroked the horses’ flanks, one after another, purred into their ears, whispered into their nostrils, and drew their wet noses into his bosom. And they drew to him, and whinnied with him, and admitted the affinity with all kinds of dumb animal affection.

The two gentlemen exchanged glances.

“Take a note of that, Ireton,” said Ashley. “It will serve you in next year’s biology.”

“This is a fool,” he said, turning to old Carroll. “Can we leave our horses in his charge?”

"Faith ye may," said the old man. "Look how they take to him. They know he has no sowl, like themselves."

And Coppal took his place between the two docile animals, and led them, as a nurse would lead her children, up to the Great House at Glendarragh.

Meanwhile the young men strolled down to the beach and had their bath; and on their return Anstie had a tea for them to which, with sharpened appetites, they did full justice.

James Carroll eyed them furtively all the time, and a few times he went out to see how was the weather. Hugh Ireton, interpreting his impatience, glanced at Ashley, who placed his flask on the table. Anstie flushed angrily and frowned, but the young men did not notice her. And James Carroll, his equanimity being restored, joined the young men at the table and told them his best yarns.

When Coppal returned with the horses, they again strolled down to the beach, and lay down lazily in the shadows of the boats. Coppal walked the horses up and down the road.

"Now," said Arthur Ashley, blowing great lazy puffs of smoke from his pipe, "I perceive you have called these boats by feminine names, as becomes an ancient salt." Old Carroll no longer resented the title. "These, now, I presume, are fancy names; but where is the *Saucy Nell*, and the *Nancy*?"

"They were the names given to their boats by riprobate and unchristened sailors in the ould days," said the old man. "But whin ye kum back to a Christian counthry, ye must fall back upon the saints of God, an' the glory and 'anner of His Church."

"Are these Saints' names?" said Ashley, reading:—"The Agnes," "The Cicely," "The Lucy," "The Anastasia"?—

"Ye don't be reading yere prayerbook whin ye goes to Mass on a Sunday, I see," said the old man, now drop-

ping into a patriarchal style of language as a privilege of old age. "I suppose ye do be lookin' around for somethin' better?"

"That's quite true," said Hugh Ireton, smiling. "It's hard enough to get him up on Sunday mornings, and, as you say, there are some ways of spending the time of service besides saying your prayers."

"One couldn't say many prayers if he had that handsome daughter of yours, Carroll, before him," said Ashley, in a moment of levity.

The old man blazed into a sudden fury.

"Drap that! Drap that, you ruffian!" he cried fiercely. "An' I thought ye had anything in yer mind, damn ye, I'd never lave ye home alive."

"There, Ashley," said Ireton, deprecatingly; "there you have thrown oil on the fire again."

"Ile on the fire! Ile on the fire!" said the old sailor, his bronzed face now flushing in crimson anger. "Be the Most High God!" he continued, lifting his hat reverently, "ye have been nearer the eternal fire, young men, than ever ye were in yere lives; an' I suspec' ye have been walkin' on the brinks of it long enough."

Now, if these young men had been wise, they would have quietly ended the conference there and then, and gone home whilst the day was declining. But what young men are wise? And the evening was long; they could get home for dinner in two hours, and this was a novelty. Hugh Ireton, who hated scenes, was for starting immediately, but his companion, lighter and merrier-hearted, demurred. This old fellow was a curiosity — a type. He would be a splendid joke in the halls of Trinity during the winter evenings, and old Rip Van Winkle in the Sleepy Hollow would be a rare piece of mimicry amongst the *jeunesse dorée* of the capital.

"Stop, Ireton," he said, whisperingly. "You won't get this chance again. I from the social, you, from the scientific standpoint, are face to face with a specimen. Are you going to throw it away?"

"I don't like it," said Ireton. "You never know how these experiences end."

The old man, half-muddled, sat with head sunk deep on his breast. A word would kindle the smouldering flame again; or a word would reduce it to white ashes.

"You mustn't resent a harmless word," said Ireton, coming over and laying his hand on the old man's shoulder. "You have been kind and hospitable. Let us part friends." Here the old man became maudlin.

"Thim are our holy Saints," he whimpered, "the Saints o' the Mass — the four by theirselves, and no wan to tech or kem near them. An' I called my little Anstie by wan of their names — Anstie Carroll — Anstie Carroll; an', tishn't because I sez it, but a better or truer girl there isn't in the barony of Imokilly. The natest hand, and the purtiest —"

"Yes, yes! but who is this — 'Miriam'?" said Ashley, impatient at the old man's tediousness.

"Miriam! Miriam! Ye mustn't spake of her at all, at all!"

"Why? Is she a saint too?" said Ashley.

"Maybe not a canonized wan!" said the old man, "because she's not wan of us. But if there's a saint in heaven this blessed and holy night, it's you — Miss Miriam!"

His head sank back on his breast again, and the two gentlemen were smoking in silence when, suddenly, an angry, but deep and rasping voice accosted them, and they looked around to see Anstie Carroll standing over them. Her light footfall on the sand had not been heard, and she now stood right behind the two young men, and she seemed to have grown in stature since they beheld her in the cottage. The girl, the coquette, was gone; and here was a woman, a woman with clenched hands and blazing eyes, looking down, as an injured woman only can look, and the young men cowered before her.

"Which of ye owns this?" she said, holding up the

empty flask which they had left behind, as a present, or in compensation for the old man's hospitality.

"Mine," said Ashley, trying to look composed under the trying ordeal of the girl's eyes. He couldn't realise that this was the shy, smiling girl of half an hour ago.

"And this?" she said, contemptuously balancing a half-sovereign on her finger, and looking from one to the other of the young men.

"It's mine," said Ireton, with a little anger. "Do you suppose, girl, that we could trespass on your hospitality without remuneration?"

"I don't understand your big words," she said, defiantly. "There, take them back. Come, father," she said, lifting up in a helpless way the poor old man. She had flung the flask and coin at the young men's feet. They stared at one another in a helpless way. She turned to go, and as she drew her father's hands within her strong arm she hissed:—

"Ye have left a black shadow across the floor above, and I can't brush it out."

As she passed away across the sands with her helpless burden, Ashley, cleaning out his pipe, said:—

"Come along, Ireton, from this uncanny place. You were right and I was wrong. We have the fool yet to face, though."

Ireton, in a serious and thoughtful manner, followed his more mercurial companion. He was a thoroughly honourable man, and could see nothing wrong in what he had done. Yet he was ashamed. There was a suggestion of some infinite meanness in that girl's address—a contemptuous accusation of something indefinite and dishonourable which he could not define. Was it the father's intoxication she resented; or the implied insult to their hospitality in offering so large a remuneration for so poor a meal? He could not conjecture. He only knew that he had been addressed in a cutting and contemptuous manner by this humble girl, who, in her own way, rough and unpolished as it was, threw into his face

an imputation of deep dishonour. He felt inexpressibly pained; and now and again turned around to look after the retreating figures. His companion, more mercurial, or less susceptible to these minor annoyances of life, was shouting, "Coppal! Coppal!" with all his might. Then, around the turn, where the pathway to the sea broadened into the country road, came the horses, slowly, not led by Coppal, the village fool, but by a lady of such extreme and rare beauty that the young men could only stare and wonder, with uplifted eyes and bared heads.

II

GLENDARRAGH

"I HAVE to apologise," she said, with simple candour, "for the liberty I have taken in sending your servant on a message."

Ashley muttered something incoherently. The soft grey eyes, shaded from the sun under a broad-leaved straw hat, that bent and waved towards the sweet face beneath it, seemed to have burned up and withered every trace of thought and even of emotion within him. Ireton stood behind watching the apparition, whilst strange, prophetic dreams surged through his mind. He felt in a moment that distinct forevision, which says unmistakably: Your fates have met!

"The truth is," continued Miss Miriam Lucas, "one of my workmen has hurt himself with a pruning-knife, and I fear an artery is severed. So I sent poor Coppal at all speed for the dispensary doctor!"

"I am only sorry you did not send one of our horses, Madam," said Ashley. "You couldn't have done us a greater honour."

"I'm sure I'm ever so much obliged," she said, "but I couldn't take that liberty. Besides, Coppal is fleet of foot, and I hope the Doctor will be able to reach this poor fellow before he bleeds to death."

"I wonder" — said Ashley turning to his companion, suggestively.

"I'm not sure that I may not be presuming," said Ireton, coming forward, "but it happens that I have some slight knowledge of surgery; and if I could be of any service —"

"Thank you ever so much," said Miriam, "of course you can; for we have done only what is barely necessary: and I doubt if we have stopped the bleeding."

"Then, with your permission," he said, taking the reins gently from her hands, "I shall ride up to the house — "By Jove," he added suddenly, "I quite forgot to ask where it was?"

"Just there," she said, "that white mansion. You can go around by the village, and ride in by the front gate."

Ireton threw his horse into a gallop; and though he passed Carroll's house, and knew that there was a figure at the door, he saw nothing. Emotion swept experience into utter oblivion. He rode up the white road, passed under the strange, iron gate, with the curious emblems carved on the stone-work, and went swiftly into the stable-yard behind the house. There, stretched on straw, his face quite blanched from loss of blood, was the workman. A crowd of curious, helpless servants were around him, chattering, exclaiming, frightened. Beneath him was a pool of blood. Ireton lifting the very pruning-knife that had slipped and cut the leg, ripped open the man's trousers, and saw at a glance that an artery was severed just below the knee. A rough tourniquet, consisting of a silk handkerchief, twisted by a strong piece of wood, was bound tight above the knee, and this, with the recumbent posture of the wounded man, had partially stopped the hæmorrhage. But now and again, the blood jerked forth, and stained with fresh red the deep-brown mass of coagulated blood beneath. Ireton, at once, made his preparations, asking: —

"Who did this?"

"Miss Miriam, God bless her!"

"She has saved his life," said Ireton.

The wounded man moaned, "God bless her!"

The young student called for fresh linen, made a second bandage, tied it until it seemed to cut into the flesh, and had just completely suspended the dangerous

bleeding, when the doctor cantered into the yard. He had brought all his appliances, and the two surgeons had little trouble in removing the man to his own cottage. There Ireton left him; and after washing his hands strolled back to the yard where he had left his horse. Not before, however, he had carefully secreted in the breast-pocket of his coat, the silken bandage that had been tied roughly above the wound. He thought he saw the letter M worked in whiter silk thread in the corner of the handkerchief.

A servant was waiting to invite the three gentlemen into the house. The two young students hesitated for a moment owing to the lateness of the hour; but it was only for a moment. A second time throwing their horses' bridles to Coppal, who had come with the doctor, they stood in the porch at Glendarragh. Now, the day, as we have said, was oppressively warm, so warm that this was the only danger the dispensary surgeon feared for the wounded man. Yet, as the young men entered the spacious hall, they felt a curious chill, as travellers feel, when, coming out of the hot oven of the square of an Italian city, they lift the heavy leathern *portière* of a Cathedral Church, and stand in the gloom of the chilled interior. And yet, it was not cold, for the doors being wide open, the hot air had penetrated into the gloomy hall, and warmed every recess. It was rather an uncanny feeling — a thrill of nerves, as of a ghostly hand laid suddenly on the shoulder, or a cold finger touching the forehead in sleep. Both shuddered, then looked at each other and smiled. They erroneously interpreted each other's thoughts. It is the bare and untenanted look of the place, each said, that causes him to shrink. And it was bare. The floor was uncarpeted; not a picture hung upon the walls; not a flower decorated the windows. The mighty antlers of some forest monarch; the skins of wild beasts killed in the jungle; the fowling-pieces on the walls, or rusty axes or pikes from fargone times — even the familiar hall-clock, were conspicuous by their absence. Only one thing relieved the bare desolation — a heavy

and intricate cornice, which hung down almost on their heads its weight of grapes, and leaves, and flowers; and a superb centre-piece of similar stucco, that filled half the ceiling and drooped until one could touch its splendid workmanship with the hand. But, I am wrong. For there, in the centre of the desolation, was the white statue-like figure of the goddess of the place, and the idol of its people — Miriam Lucas! Ireton once more shivered under the chill, and the touch of the Fate, which said: Your lives are converging together under shadow and sunshine!

She welcomed them with simple dignity into the dining-room. This, too, was almost bare of furniture. A heavy mahogany dining-table filled the entire centre of the room. There was a wood fire burning in the grate. Near it, in a high-backed chair, carved out of black bog-oak, sate a young, old man — young comparatively in years, old in care and sickness, and he held his hands weakly to the fire.

“Father,” said Miriam, coming forward, “these gentlemen have been very kind about poor Dwyer. I thought you would like to thank them.”

“Certainly, Miriam,” he said, feebly rising from his seat, and as feebly falling back. “You are very welcome, gentlemen,” he said, deprecatingly. “I didn’t quite catch the names?”

“My name is Ashley,” said Arthur, “and this is Ireton. You know the doctor, I presume?”

“Oh, doctor,” the invalid said, turning round, “I didn’t see you. I hope you are very well. And you are Mr. Ashton?”

“Ashley,” Arthur corrected.

“Ashley! Ashley! The name is quite familiar. There was a solicitor of that name practising in the same chambers in Dublin. Ashley! Ashley!”

“My father was a solicitor,” said Arthur.

“Ah, then! it must be the same! And you are Mr. Ireland?” he said, looking at Hugh Ireton.

"Ireton," said Hugh, meekly correcting him.

"A good old name!" said the invalid. "Ireton came over with Cromwell, and did good work in this miserable country. We want a Cromwell and an Ireton now!"

The young men did not respond. The Doctor, who was a thorough Nationalist and rebel, frowned.

"And I presume you are both professional men?" said Lucas stretching his hands to the flame. "How cold it is this afternoon!"

"We're studying for the professions," said Ashley. "We're Trinity men!"

"Ah, indeed, and so am I. What rooms do you occupy?" he cried with some show of animation.

Ashley mentioned wing, corridor and rooms.

"Ah, indeed! They were occupied in my time by Hemsworth and Spelman. Hems, as we called him, was killed, poor fellow, in the engagement at Alma; and Spelman — I don't know what became of Spelman."

"Spelman, father, is partner with Mr. Holthsworth. Why you had a letter from him yesterday!"

Miriam had spoken; and then flushed scarlet; and then grew suddenly pale at the revelation of her father's infirmity.

But he was in no wise offended.

"Quite true, Miriam. It is strange, now, gentlemen, that I can recall the most trivial events of thirty years ago, but I cannot remember what occurred this morning. The rooms you speak of in Trinity, their furniture, their books, the windows, the faces of my old comrades, all come clear before my mental vision; but I cannot recall a name heard to-day. I shall forget your names before you depart. Ah, that struck your fancy, too, Mr. Ireley?"

"Yes," said Ireton. "I fear I have been impolite; but I couldn't take my eyes from that strange carving. Might I look closer?"

"By all means. It was a freak, I believe, of a drunken wood-carver, who used to come around here in the old

times, long before we came here. I should have liked to take it down and burn it; but Miriam wishes it to remain."

Ireton rose, and went over to view this strange symbol more closely. Between the broad fire-place, surrounded too by elaborate sculptures of Cupids and Psyches in white marble, and the wall furthest from the window, ran a long, narrow frieze of woodwork carved in strange and fantastic figures. Along a broad road or avenue, a solitary figure walked. It was the figure of a man, and a man in a state of absolute terror and bewilderment. Lining the roads on either side were tall statues, mostly draped female figures; who looked down on the solitary wayfarer, and held out their hands as if warning him against an immediate and appalling Fate. Those, which he had already passed, had vanished or were vanishing in smoke, as an actor, who had performed his part, might make his bow and retire behind the scenes. At the end of the avenue, and right in the centre was a winged angel, its back turned towards the on-coming wayfarer. It held before it, but screened by its wings from behind, something that swung and dangled in the air. The observer could see it; the wayfarer could not. It was a skeleton. Beneath the rude sculpture were written ruder verses:—

*"O'er the moorland the pathway winds whitely,
On the road are the idols of death;
The masters shall pass in their terror,
Into smoke, like a vapour of breath;
The idols shall turn and vanish,
As the mists that are lifted at morn.
Shall turn and hiss as they perish
In laughter their hatred and scorn.
Till down where the bridge spans the river,
An angel, with outstretched wing,
And hands wreathed forewards shall give them
A promise the future will bring.
And lo! as they pass with a smile
After dread, and a light in their eyes,
A skeleton, knotted from iron*

*Shall crush them to death, and their cries
Shall ring through the oaks of Glendarragh,
And the life-blood shall curdle in the veins
Of the list'ners, who shriek in their terror:
'The curse o'er Glendarragh remains!'* ”

Ireton read it carefully, and turning round noticed a look of pain and perturbation on the face of Miss Lucas. Her father, holding his hands to the flames, seemed to have forgotten his visitors.

“I thought all that legendary humbug was at an end in Ireland,” said Ireton, interpreting the look of pain on Miriam’s face.

“Eh!” said the invalid waking up. “Humbug? So it is! Rot, I call it. But the soothsayer was merciful. He gave us the obverse of the medal, too. There it is!” And Ireton again arose to study an exactly similar allegory between the fire-place and the window. But the similarity was in outline, not in detail; for here the figures, as the wayfarer passed, stepped from their pedestals and accompanied him on his perilous journey. Over the bridge, the Angel stood sentinel again; but this time, instead of a skeleton, there was an infant in his arms; instead of Despair and Death, there was Hope and Life. Beneath it, and interpreting it, was a similar doggerel: —

*“But one day o'er the pathway of waters,
Paved bright with the gold of the sun,
A fair ship shall come curts'ying and bowing;
And down where the rivulets run,
And the Ocean draws in his glad tribute
Of streams springing fresh from the land,
And flings a broad circlet of foam-waves
On the levels of glittering sand,
A maiden as white as the foam,
And as strong as the strength of the sea,
Shall welcome her bridegroom — a giver
Of life to the people is he;
Bearing health in his hands, and a love,
That is better than ruddiest gold,
Paid back by the love of his bride,
And the love of his people untold.*”

*And over the road winding whitely
Hand in hand shall they pass to their fate,
Followed close by the spirits that gladly
Flinging far all their scorn and their hate,
Transfigured to spirits light-bearing,
And chaunting a hymn as they glide,
Cast their robes, pearl-encrusted, gold-broidered,
'Neath the feet of the bridegroom and bride.
And down where the bridge spans the river,
An angel with outstretchéd wing
Shelters deep underneath his white cincture
Some dear promise the future will bring.
And lo! as they pass he flings wide
His garments of light, and they see
A babe, with the face of a seraph,
Laughing low in his rapturous glee,
And uplifting his hands to the bride;
Then the spirits glide down to the shore;
And the birds carol loud in the woodlands:
'The curse of Glendarragh is o'er!'"*

"I agree with you, Sir," said Ireton, when he had read the lines, "these rustic prophecies are out of place in the nineteenth century. No one believes in them; and the sooner they are swept away the better."

"You may be quite right, Mr. Ireton," said Miss Lucas, looking him straight in the face. "But where is the gain in burning that piece of oak, when the allegory is cut deep into the hearts of the people; and where would be the use in destroying these verses, when they are chanted around every hearth in the farmers' and peasants' cabins every night?"

"No wonder we are a backward lot," said Ashley. "There's no use in trying to graft a new civilisation here."

"No, indeed!" said the doctor drily.

"The old traditions have their own charms," said Miriam.

"I wish they were all, people, priests, and prophecies," said the invalid in a sudden paroxysm of anger, "where Cromwell sent them, if the devil had only let them stay there — in Hell or Connaught!"

His head fell forward on his breast as if he were dead.

"There," said the doctor, "I'm always warning him against excitement. Some day it will be fatal. Gentlemen, let us take our leave!"

"I fear I have acted rashly, doctor," said Miriam, meekly following them into the hall.

"No, no, no," the doctor reassured her. "But he must be kept quiet, and leave these infernal politics alone. Good day! Be sure to give him that draught, but carefully!"

She bade good day! to the two students; but in some strange way, Ireton, when she withdrew her hand, continued gazing at her abstractedly. She, too, looked deep into his soul, and then turned sadly away.

Before they departed with the doctor at the village entrance, they lingered for a little while, trying to shake off, yet loth to part with, the impressions they had received from their visit to Glendarragh House. They had paused at the end of the valley, by which the road to the sea swept down in hillocks and hollows; and looked backwards. The deep earth fissure, through which a tiny stream trickled to mingle its sweet waters with the brackish waves, was feathered on both sides with tiny oaks, as if a new plantation had been formed after an older oak-wood had been felled. These trees gave the valley its name — Glendarragh — The Glen of the Oak. At its northern extremity, and completely shutting it in was the old mansion, in which our students now were deeply interested. There was nothing very remarkable about its appearance, nothing imposing, and certainly nothing that would suggest such ghostly things as tragedies or prophecies of tragedies to come. It was a square, plain building, constructed more for use than ornament. The two windows of the drawing-room on the right, the corresponding windows of the dining-room on the left; and the five windows of the second story let sun and sea air freely into the large and lofty rooms. There was a pediment overhead, bare and unsculptured; a porch beneath, supported on four massive Doric pillars; and that

was all. Yet, there they stood, gazing up the valley, these three men, and their thoughts went out simultaneously to that grey-haired, broken man, and that spirit, who guarded him; and their thoughts wandered curiously to the past, inquiringly to the future; and the doctor, interpreting the wishes of his acquaintances said brusquely: —

“A story? Yes! And a curse? Yes! And the promise of a reversal? Yes! And I’m not a Son of Esculapius if the curse is not reversed by that young girl. I wish I could ask you to dine,” he continued, “but my house is so far away. The only way in which that story can be rightly told is around a log fire, and with steaming glasses, and lighted pipes. This is not the place, nor time, nor weather for a story: —”

“You’ve got a confoundedly long way of prefacing it, doctor,” said Ashley impatiently. “You must be an awful botch of a surgeon if you cut around a case so slowly.”

The doctor laughed.

“Youth always impatient —” he said.

“But the curse? the curse? the curse?” said Ashley.

“Is soon told,” said the doctor. “A tyrant — Whiteboys — house attacked at midnight — marauders beaten off and dispersed — yeomanry searching the country right and left, night and day — labourer’s cottage where our wounded friend, Dwyer, is now lying — son of the widow absent — suspected by landlord — chased right and left across the country — the bloodhounds closing in — the fox seeks his cover — the hare his form — the outlaw his mother’s cabin. — mother swears he is away — the quarry found under a rick of turf — dragged forth and tied — mother stripped naked, and flogged in sight of her son — son flogged and then hanged in his mother’s presence. Mother kneels and prays the Most High God that every owner of Glendarragh may die a violent death until the Day of Judgment; and that no voice of mother in her birth-throes, or child in its cradle shall ever be heard there. Curse so far fulfilled; and the righteous

avenged; for the curse of a widow or an orphan is registered in the archives of Heaven, and cannot be changed by human hands or human wills. No child has ever been born in that house, and every occupier, one after another, has died a violent death —”

“Then those people are not the owners?” said Ashley.

“Yes, and no! Yes, and no!” said the doctor cautiously checking himself.

“They don’t belong to the place?” said Ashley again.

“Your friend will tell you,” replied the doctor smiling, “that the final lecture in *our* course, not in *yours*, of course, is on the honour of the professor, and the necessity of reticence amongst medical men about family secrets. Good day, gentlemen! A pleasant ride home!”

The doctor cantered gaily away; and Ashley said with a frown: —

“A confounded cad!”

“No! he was quite right,” said his companion. “It has been rather an interesting day!”

“I should rather say ‘momentous,’” said Arthur Ashley.

They rode rapidly on till they came to the East Ferry again. Here they had to delay. They were so preoccupied with thought that neither had chosen to break the silence. Here, however, as they paused, they had to speak.

“There’s something uncanny about that girl,” said Ashley, as if breaking into a sudden soliloquy. “She looked the picture of innocence with her white muslin dress, and the fresh marguerites in her hat, and the little sprig of geranium at her throat. But, by Jove, I shook all over as we walked up to that haunted house together; and I had to pretend to do several very unnecessary things to this nag to conceal my nervousness. I tell you what I think, Ireton!”

“Go ahead; ’tis valuable, I know!”

“By Jove, I think she’s a Lamia; or one of those females you read of in German legend who sucks your blood at

night. Isn't that your opinion, for I perceive you're thinking of her, too!"

"No, I'm not!"

"Then, why are you in the blues?"

"I'm thinking, no! *feeling* the lash of that young girl's tongue down there on the beach!"

"Well, she was a spitfire. Alecto and Lamia all in one day. Well, here we are!"

III

A VILLAGE COQUETTE

WHETHER the doctor's explanation was historically correct cannot be proved now; but distrust it who may, or gainsay it in the light of modern historical accuracy, the fact remains that some curse did hang over Glendarragh House. No child had ever been born there, and three successive owners had adopted the Roman way of quitting life. One other had been flung from his horse and killed. The animal had been frightened by a sudden apparition one night on the road as the master rode home from his revels, and that apparition was no less than the village idiot, Coppal, who, a remote relative of the rebel who had been flogged and hanged, used sometimes at night, to keep up again the historical tradition, array his long, lank form in a white shirt, to the laughter of some and the dismay of others. But after that dread night, when the horse flung his master to death, the fool dropped his own name, if he had ever had any, and was known universally by the sobriquet, Coppal. He had his likes and dislikes, like most mortals. Amongst the former was, pre-eminently, Miriam, whom he followed like a dog everywhere, and at whose bedroom door he was found coiled up, on a mat, the faithful guardian of his beloved mistress. For this he was whipped by the master, and ordered to discontinue it. Amongst the latter was Anstie Carroll, whom he hated with all the malignity of a stunted and feeble intelligence. For Anstie, proud of her own beauty, was sarcastic on Coppal's many deformities; and the dim consciousness of his inferiority roused to vehement and vengeful passion the unbridled sensations

of the poor, mindless simpleton. Hence, the village boys made it their pastime to ask Coppal when he was going to marry Anstie; and were rewarded with showers of stones flung with ferocity, and little care of hurting, by the poor victim. Sometimes, too, Anstie, for the fun of the thing, asked Coppal the same question. He brooded over the shame and contempt of it, and when alone, made dreadful vows of a revenge that was one day to be his.

But, although the doctor pretended to our young students that he knew all about the present owners of Glendarragh, and was only prevented by professional secrecy from divulging all that he knew, the fact was, it was a sealed mystery to him, as well as to the rest of the world. All that he knew was, that they had come thither, it was supposed, from Dublin, some six years before; that they had purchased the whole estate for a song; that they lived in absolute retirement, seeing no society; that no one had called on them except the rector and his wife; that, consequently, there were all sorts of rumours rife about their antecedents; that Edwin Lucas was a sour, crabbed, cynical, sometimes a maudlin, invalid; and that Miriam Lucas was an angel. And whatever doubts might be cast on the other items of the doctor's knowledge, public opinion confirmed the last. If she had lived in the earliest ages she would have been canonized by popular acclaim, although a heretic. This latter difficulty was, however, considerably modified in the eyes of her admirers by several features in her conduct which seemed to approach very nearly to the faith of the people; and they used say, God only knows with what simple pride and faith and hope:—

“Yerra, she's wan of ourselves; but the ould fellow won't lave her. Sure, they say she has a picter of the Blessed Virgin over her bed, and she makes Coppal say his prayers, and the divil a much mind he has for that same. Cursing comes aisier to the poor angashore.”

“And, sure, she never goes to church at all, at all, tho’

the ould minister does be as mad as blazes wid her. She'd rather come to our chapel, if she could."

"Mind you me," said old Bill Motherway, a hardened old salt, "it's she that'll take away the curse from Glendarragh, by comin' over to the throe Church. That's what the prophecy says."

"There's nothing in the prophecy about the throe Church, or Catholics or Prodestans at all," said another. "Can't you keep to the truth?"

"Keep to the thruth!" Bill would cry, in that sudden flaring up of violent temper, which is one of our national, and most amiable traits, "Am I tellin' a lie? Am I? Did any wan of the nabors ever hear me tellin' a lie in the whole course of my life? It's badly becomin' of you, young man, to give the lie to your elders."

"I'm not givin' you the lie," the other would answer, "but where's the use in invintin' things? Don't we all know that Miss Miriam is wid us in her heart? Can't we keep to that, and lave the 'Curse' alone?"

But how could they leave the "Curse" alone, when it was familiar to them as their prayers; when it was crooned in its original Gaelic by old grandmothers over the children's cradles, and turned into a weird and solemn lullaby; when the blacksmith sang it over his anvil, a dread accompaniment to the strokes of his hammer; when the ploughman flung it at his unwilling team and the carter to his fagged or lazy horse; when the fisherman sang it on the deep, and the girls over their cottage looms; and even the priest at the altar quoted it as another example, almost equal to scriptural in its solemnity, of the terrible Nemesis that follows crime even in this world, and pursues its path of vengeance from generation to generation? No! there was no hushing of that dread curse and prophecy here, where everything tended to confirm and preserve it. The people simply waited in great fear and hope for its final fulfilment. But perhaps there was no one so deeply affected by it as Miriam herself. Naturally endowed with a strong mind, she treated the prophecy at

first with all the levity, or rather buoyancy, of youth. She laughed at it as an old-world mysticism — she who had come from city life where such things are regarded as pretty heirlooms of a country's history; or ethnological indications of the bent or bias of a people's fancies. And so, when her father would have taken down the rude, suggestive emblems, and burned them, Miriam objected. They were antiques; they were historical; they were unique — something to show to strangers on their visits. The strangers never came, but the figures stared for ever from their ghastly setting; and by degrees, as she heard the prophecies verified in the traditions of the people, a strange awe crept over her, and she was face to face with the problem — Would she witness once more its fulfilment in her father; or was she destined by the unrelenting Fates to uplift the curse for ever? Hence, over her strong mind, a tinge of superstition fell, and the awful loneliness of her position gave, alas! too much time for brooding over the ghastly but fascinating subject. Then, once and again, she felt that she was brought face to face with her Fate; but she never felt this so strongly as when Ireton's grave gaze rested on her, and she felt in the grasp of his strong hand something protecting and prophetic.

When her father woke up revived after the draught the doctor had ordered for such attacks of sudden coma, he was in one of his irritable moods, and complained bitterly of the intrusion of the strangers.

"It was my fault, Father," she answered, meekly. "I thought the circumstances demanded some courtesy at our hands."

"Where did you meet them?" he asked, sharply.

"On the strand. I was looking for Coppal, and found him minding their horses. I took the bridles from him and sped him on his errand."

"Took their bridles!" said her father, with indignant surprise. "A most unladylike proceeding! Ah, my child, how much you miss a mother's care!"

She stood before him, looking down on him with flashing eyes.

"Father," she said slowly, but with strange meaning, "would you repeat these words?"

But his head had fallen on his breast. He waved her away with a humble gesture.

"No!" he said. "Go from me, and leave me alone!"

One other reason why her village admirers thought Miriam sympathetic with their faith was, that she was rather fond of visiting the little whitewashed village chapel, and remaining there, sometimes, for a whole afternoon. In reality, there was no thought, or desire, of changing her own religion, for she had not given religion much of her thought, and seemed content with that modern form, which consists of well-doing, without reference to higher or supernatural motives. But she found the quiet of that humble church very restful and soothing to agonised nerves, strung with the tension of wonder about her past and anxiety about her future. There was something so quiet, so placid, in this remote and solitary temple, and there were such silent sermons about resignation, and suffering, and peace, preached from these pictures and signs that they tranquillised feelings too sensitive above all to the questions of destiny and the operations of blind fate. Above all, she was fond of strolling down to the church on the evenings when the rude, rustic choir were practising the simple music that accorded with their poor, limited capacities; and the hymns echoed back in her heart in many a lonely hour, and she sang them to soothe and compose a tried and turbulent spirit. One such evening, the week after the visit of our young students, she strolled through the quiet village, her head bare, for, unless in blinding sunshine, she always liked to walk uncovered, and to swing her broad hat by her side. The moonlight was almost painful in its intensity, as it fell on whitewashed walls and dusty road, and threw black, inky shadows every-

where, and left untouched, except to deepen its purple blackness, the still yet throbbing sea. At great intervals the waves sighed out their little souls upon the beach, and the soft wash of their waters was very soothing. The old people sat by their doors, gossiping, but all arose to make a respectful curtesy to their young queen as she passed by. She, in turn, had a cheerful word for all, calling each old villager by her name, and making minute inquiries that seemed to prove an individual interest in each. They knew where she was going, and many a prayer followed her for her conversion.

"Sure, that would settle everything," they said. "How could a curse fall on a Catholic, if God gave her the grace?"

She entered the dark church and sat down in the deeper shadows cast by the pillars from the lights in the choir. She listened to the hum of voices above in the gallery, and smiled at the naïve remarks of the choir-conductor, who was also the local teacher.

"Ladies *and* gentlemen, the altos are drowning the sopranos, and the basses are obliterating by their profundity the other intégral portions of this amateur orchestra. What we want is not the individual vanity of two or three voices, but the simultaneous harmony of all. Miss Carroll, would you please commence that beautiful antiphon, *Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes!* which means, Praise the Lord, all ye nations!"

Anstie had trapped the teacher, too, amongst the other victims of her coquetry.

"Mr. O'Donnell," continued the master, "you may be able to sing *Heaveyo* to the lifting of an anchor; but remember, your naval accomplishments are out of place in a limited place like this. Go on, Miss Carroll, and make the nightingale who is singing, or ought to be singing, outside, jealous of your vocal endowments."

"Janie Calverty can sing a solo just as well as Miss Carroll," put in another village swain. "Why are ye always putting Miss Carroll in front?"

"I consider that remark, Sir, most unparliamentary," said the master. "I make no distinction between the solitary and individual members of this choir. Do I, ladies and gentlemen?"

"No!" strongly from some. "No!" feebly from others. "You do!" from a ventriloquial voice in a far corner.

"Certainly not! I know my duty too well, and the responsibilities of my position in this parish. But I cannot hold the equilibrium of impartial administration unless I am upheld by the unanimous approval of the entire choir. Ladies and gentlemen, I hereby tender my formal resignation of this most ungrateful and impetunious situation. I retire into private life."

"Oh no, no, master, don't! Don't! Can't you hold your tongue, you fool? You are always creating disturbance here!"

"Oh, by all means, Mr. Lavarty," said Anstie, in a pout. "Let Miss Calverty take my place. I'm quite certain she'll be very much admired, especially by Mr. O'Leary. Perhaps they would sing a juet?"

"I'm not sayin' anything agen you, Anstie," said poor O'Leary —

"Anstie? Miss Carroll, please, when you're addressing me —"

"Quite right!" said the master. "It is necessary to observe the customs of modern decorum and civilization even in such remote places as ours. Please, Sir, address the gifted and accomplished ladies of the choir according to the manners of good society!"

This was amusing. But when they did sing — sing with all their plain, untutored voices the sweet melodies of the Church, the rhythm and music and prayer sank deep in Miriam's heart, and softened it by the magic of appeals to the great Unseen — the antagonists of the dread Fates who were weaving in darkest colours, as she thought, the web and woof of her life.

She lingered in the darkness of the church long after

the choir had departed, partly because she liked the solemn silence, partly because she did not care to be seen by the too curious. When all had gone she came to the chapel door, and was just stepping into the sea of moonlight outside, when she heard voices close by in earnest conversation, and her own name mentioned. She listened. It was Anstie Carroll who was speaking.

"Oh, no!" she was saying, with an affectation of great scorn and pride. "They didn't come to see me, but to see the 'Beauty of Glendarragh'!"

"An' who the divil, I'd like to know," said her male companion, "is the 'Beauty of Glendarragh' but yourself, Anstie?"

"Me-e?" said Anstie. "Oh, no! There are superior persons in the neighbourhood who would be a greater attraction."

"Why, thin, that's the biggest lie ye ever tould, Anstie; an' I'd like to hear any wan sayin' it but yerself. Be all the goats in Kerry, and that's a hairy oath, 'twould be their lasht remark. I know some wan who'd spile their beauty."

"But ye don't suppose that gentlemen (what emphasis poor Anstie laid on that *gentlemen*) would come riding over here to see a poor village gurl like me?"

"Well, that bates me too," said the Voice. "If I thought they were goin' to stale ye away, Anstie, from wan who thinks more of ye than father or mother, brother or sister, the Lord keep his hand on me for fear I'd do harrum!"

"Well, all I know is," said Anstie, "they kem up to our house, and we gave them — refreshments. But wan of them stared me and stared me, the impident fellow —"

"The misfortunate blagard! But how could he help it, Anstie? The wandher is, he tuk his eyes aff av you at all, at all!"

"Well, it was most ungentlemanlike," said Anstie, smiling in the praises of her admirer. "Thin they went down to get their bawth, as they called it, but what I'm

comin' to is this. I saw they were dosing the poor old man with whiskey; and whin he was well-intoxicated, they took him down to the beach. But that's not what I'm comin' to. They left behind them what, d'ye think?"

"Maybe some of the liquor?" suggested the Voice.

"No! but the empty flask and a half-sovereign!"

"Begobs! And what did you do?"

"What did I do?" said Anstie, like a tragedy queen. "What 'ud any virtuous and respectable gurl do under the circumstances? I went down to the sands; I held out the flask, and demanded — 'Who owns this?' 'I,' said the fellow that was staring me. I threw it at his feet. 'And who owns this?' I said, holding up the half-sovereign?' 'I,' said the foxoy fellow, the worst of the two. I flung it at his feet. Then I took my poor helpless father and led him away. But," said Anstie, breaking into a violent paroxysm of tears, "they won't come here to timpt a poor helpless gurl agin."

"Be this, and be that," said her companion, in an affected rage, "av they do, ye know who to send for — but, Anstie, can't ye give a poor bye the right to pur-tect ye, now and forevermore, Amen?"

"Leave me, now, Declan," said Anstie. "I'm over-powered. I'm not myself. Some other time. And don't go down be the priest's house, for fear he'd see ye."

When they had gone, Miriam waited a little while, her mind a prey to painful sensations. She knew well that Anstie was a confirmed flirt, and that her account of Ireton and Ashley, and their motives, was dictated solely by the desire to stimulate the jealousy of her rustic admirer. Nevertheless, the suggestions were so piquant, if painful, that they left an impression on Miriam's mind as of a vanished vision, or an ideal that had been rudely shattered by hard contact with nature and reality. In a few days Ireton had grown from a commonplace visitor into a hero, who was destined to rescue her from a horrible fate; and on this airy conception she had been

building all kinds of hopes. The very words of the prophecy seemed to anticipate their fulfilment:

"Shall welcome her bridegroom — a giver
Of life to the people is he;
Bearing health in his hands, and a love
That is better than ruddiest gold."

And with the splendid hope of youth her fancy had leaped forward, and constructed her future, with Hugh Ireton as the radiant centre and soul of it. And now, Ugh! To think of her knight drugging an old man into intoxication, and bribing a miserable village girl with gold! It was horrible.

Her father was waiting for her. He, like many similar invalids, was much better in the evenings than in the mornings of his wrecked and shattered existence; and he had a morbid fear of the night and the darkness. He welcomed her cheerfully.

"I have been thinking, Miriam," he said, "of our visitors of a week ago — Mr. Ashton and Mr Ireley. I regret what I said to you. It was rash and peevish. I remember now, well, Mr. Ashton's father. 'Twas he drew our marriage settlement. Nay, nay, child, don't start! I am not going to touch a painful subject, I only wished to say, that I retract. They are gentlemen — by birth and manners — Mr. Ashton and Mr. Ireley. I hope they will soon come again. They are gentlemen; and after all, it is rare to meet gentlemen nowadays!"

"It is, father, very rare," said Miriam, wearily. "Let us dismiss the subject for the present. May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, Miriam! but not the old question," he cried nervously, "not the old question, Miriam! Let the dead past bury its dead!"

Miriam rose up, and taking her candle, went to her room.

IV

THE LADY OF THE LEA

IN a bay-window, overlooking the sea in that fashionable sweep of fine houses, called the Crescent, a lady sat this same summer evening. She was not old; but her hair, perhaps prematurely grey, was folded down over her temples in rather ancient fashion. She was still very handsome; but something very like a want of high intellectual power detracted from the expression of perfect symmetry in her features, and suddenly arrested anything like admiration. On the other hand, her face wore a look of calm, simple benevolence, with a delightful undershade of vanity, that at once substituted love for admiration. Her conversation at once conveyed the same impression. She could not say a brilliant thing, but she could say a kind thing; and her little regrets for the past, with its triumphs and lost pleasures blended delightfully with her anxiety about every one connected with her, and her interest in the smallest details that affected humanity at large. She sat on a favourite low chair, and on a small wicker table before her were her work — the thousand and one little articles that feminine tastes or industries require, her gold-trimmed pince-nez, and her favourite book open at her favourite page. The book was Lodge's Peerage and Baronetage of a rather ancient date. The page opened freely to the touch from frequent use, and in the lower right-hand corner you might read:—

Sherle, Sir Ralph, of Sherle Manor, Co. Kilkenny, J.P. and D.L. for the County Kilkenny. Born 1808, died 1878, married Elizabeth, third daughter of Richard Charles Blount, of Blomfield, Herts, and has issue:—

William	b. 1830.	Lydia	b. 1834.
Octavius	b. 1832.	Caroline	b. 1835.

This last entry, Caroline, was marked in red ink, from which it is reasonable to conclude that the lady was Caroline Sherle, youngest daughter of the aforesaid baronet; but this name was long since merged, and lost to all but the owner, in the less romantic name of Mrs. Ireton.

Yes, it was Mrs. Ireton, mother of Hugh Ireton, that sat in the bay-window this long summer evening, sat quietly working and reading, and only grew impatient when the clock in the hall tolled out the threequarters, and roused her to the intelligence that dinner was almost ready.

"Bless me!" she cried, starting up hastily, "what has become of these boys? They should have been here an hour ago. They'll have no time to dress for dinner; and I won't, no, I will not," she cried determinedly, "allow the cook to defer the dinner one minute after seven."

Just then there came across the shrubbery in front of the Crescent the sound of two voices — the one, a deep manly voice, the other, the shrill treble of a child. The words were the old, familiar ones: —

*"I said to the rose: 'The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine', so I sware to the rose,
'For ever and ever, mine!'"*

The music was that which seems to be consecrated to the use of Trinity students.

It was Arthur Ashley toiling somewhat painfully up the steep path that led from Westbourne to the Crescent, for Maud Ireton, youngest sister of Hugh Ireton was just then perched on his shoulder, and accompanying his fine voice with her childish notes. She had gone down through the shrubbery to meet them, as they came up from West-

bourne, where they had left their tired horses in the livery stable, and Hugh had kissed his sister with his usual exclamation: "Well, little witch?" and Arthur had swung her up on his great broad shoulder, her favourite perch, when her favourite, Arthur, came down on the holidays to see them. Faces, attracted by the music, stared at them from behind window-blinds in the Crescent; some laughed, some said "Well! well!" Some declared it was a forward child. Little she recked as she rocked to and fro, and thrust her tiny fingers in her favourite's curls, and sang out of her child's heart the famous love-song of the then favourite poet of England.

"There, I knew 'twas that child again," cried Mrs. Ireton coming to the door to meet them. "Come, Maud; are you not ashamed of yourself — a great big girl like you?"

"No, mamma, I am not," said Maud, leaping lightly from Arthur's shoulder. "Don't you know that Mr. Ashley and I are engaged?"

"Well, dear me, dear me," said Mrs. Ireton, "when will wonders cease? It's the servants, I'm sure, that are putting their nonsense into that child's head. Run upstairs, Mr. Ashley. Dinner is just ready!"

Hugh Ireton, whilst making a rapid toilet, as rapidly ran over in his mind a hundred reasons for telling his mother all about the afternoon adventure, and a hundred other reasons for not telling her. He well knew his mother's pride and punctiliousness, which was concealed, but never destroyed by her more amiable traits of character. The daughter of a baronet, whose mother belonged to the Blounts of Hertfordshire, had high notions of what was due to her dignity. She would never put it so, or make it a mere personal estimate. She laid the scruple at the door of Society, which demanded all the respect due to blood and lineage with rigorous exactness; and when her conscience, or gentle feelings smote her, she said: "Noblesse oblige!" But she drew imaginary lines, but oh! how impassable and rigid they were, between the

grades of Society; and these latter were shaded away into such thin colourings of distinction that Hugh Ireton, who was a clever mathematician, gave up that problem in despair. He tied his cravat carefully, and made a swift, wise resolution, which we commend to our readers in similar dilemmas, to let events develop themselves. And it was Maud, mischievous, teasing, and very embarrassing young lady that she was, who touched the spring and drew out the slow development. She had been allowed down to dinner by the special request of Arthur Ashley.

"Mr. Ashley," she said, with her mouth full of pudding, "why was you singin' the 'Lady of the Lea'? That's not one of youse songs."

"When and where thou *enfant très terrible*, was I singing the 'Lady of the Lea'?"

"You was singin' it, comin' up the market steps," said the unabashed Maud, "and you was lookin' back at Hugh, and laughin'."

The young men laughed; Mrs. Ireton appeared disconcerted as one from whom a secret is concealed.

"Oh! that's a favourite of mine," said Arthur gaily. "I always sing that when I'm in good humour."

"But why was you laughin' at Hugh?" said Maud, impolitely drawing the spoon down along her tongue.

"Because if I have chosen a dark beauty for mine own, Hugh by the law of contraries must choose one who 'is young and fair,'" said Arthur gaily.

"That's not the reason," said Maud judicially.

"Tell us the day's adventures," said Mrs. Ireton; "where did you go, and whom did ye meet?"

"We went down to the sea at Whitecove," said Arthur, whilst Hugh looked serious and annoyed, "had a dip. Met no one but an old fisherman and a virago of a daughter, who put on tremendous airs when we offered her a few shillings for a cup of tea."

"A few shillings?" said Mrs. Ireton.

"Yes! You know we put them to a lot of inconvenience,

boiling hot water, making cakes, etc., and they looked poor!"

"H'm!" said Mrs. Ireton. "And of course, she was ill-favoured and very old?"

"N-not exactly. Only very ill-tempered and as contemptuous as a *débutante* at her first ball."

"Dear me! what strange similes you boys use."

"But was she 'young and fair'?" put in Maud.

"No, thou inquisitor! She was brown and freckled."

"Then, why was you saying:—

"She was young and she was fair,
That Lady of the Lea."

"Look here, mother," said Hugh, tilting back his chair. "This young cross-examiner general and deputy-detective scents a secret. There is none—at least none worth speaking about. The only other persons we met were an old retired gentleman, named Lucas, his daughter, and the doctor."

"You don't mean to say you called on these people?" said Mrs. Ireton, with an attempt at a frown.

"No, we didn't call," said Hugh resignedly. "The fact was there was an accident. A labourer cut an artery. The doctor was miles away. We heard it, and I proffered my services which were accepted. Then Miss Lucas kindly asked us into the house—"

"For what?" asked Mrs. Ireton grandly.

"Well, I really don't know," said Hugh, embarrassed. "I believe she wished us to see her father, who was an invalid, and who desired to thank us."

"Well?" said Mrs. Ireton, dubiously.

"Was she 'young and fair'?" said Maud.

"Now, now, my young romancer," said her brother, losing temper, and not wishing to reply to his mother, "keep your novel reading to the kitchen and Lizzie. Was she young and fair? How should I know? What is it to me?"

"But why was Mr. Ashley laughin' at you, comin' up the steps?" said Maud. "Will you marry her?"

"Mother, let's have a cigar outside," said Hugh. "Arthur will be rushing for the train."

"By all means," said Mrs. Ireton, coldly, rising and passing swiftly through the door.

Arthur had not a cigar on the terrace. He had a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Maud in the garden.

"You're a pretty little minx," he said almost angrily to her. "There you've caused a bad breach between Hugh and his mother. Why will you never stop your impertinent questionings?"

Her under lip fell, and, in an instant, a great big drop gathered in her eyes and fell sharply upon her little hand. His heart smote him for the child.

"Never mind, Maud," he said, gaily, taking her hand, and running up and down the garden walk. "I was only joking, Hugh and mother will make it all right."

She quickly came round.

"Yeth," she said, "but who was the Lady of the Lea?"

"Well, well," he said, sitting down, "nothing can beat feminine ingenuity. You must have the secret, I suppose?"

"I don't want it," she said, with a pout. "You may tell it to Clare Hewson, if you likes."

"All right," he said, lapsing into silence, and watching the child's face intently.

"Whin you goes away, and I suppose you won't come back any more —"

"Is that your wish, Maud?" he said, smiling.

"Yeth," she said, "when youse nasty. You may come back when youse nice again."

"Very kind, I'm sure," said Arthur smiling. "Well, when I go away?"

"I'll come to Hugh, an' I'll say: Brother Hugh, your little sister, Maud, never kept any secrets from you, an' you shouldn't have any secrets from her. I tole you, Brother Hugh, lots of fings — how Annie Goldschmid had the meagles, and Harry Wimpole got the mumps; an' how Lizzie bwoke that jardinier, an' how she use put her

fingers in the butter, an' bweak the eggs in her han's before putting 'em —"

"Stop that! you little realist," cried Arthur Ashley in disgust. "I shall never eat anything in your house again."

"But I wasn't tellin' you anyfing," said the unconscious Maud. "It was to Brother Hugh I was talkin'. And then I will say: Who is the Lady of the Sea? an' are you goin' to marry her, Brother Hugh, and leave your little Maud here alone?"

"Alone," cried Arthur, indignantly. "Do you call it alone when I'm here to the front?"

"Yeth! but you're nasty. You never tells poor little Maudie anyfing, an' she tells you everyfing."

"There, by Jove, I'll tell you one thing, my Chief Inquisitor. That's the gun, an' I have but a few minutes to catch the train. Good-bye, little woman, and don't dream of me!"

He strode away rapidly; but just as he passed out the garden gate, his heart smote him for the child, and he looked back. She was a picture of disconsolateness and despair. Her two hands hung limp at her side, and she looked with swimming eyes towards the gate. He ran back, snatched her up hastily, and kissed her.

"You're *my* Lady of the Lea!" he said gaily. "Don't fret Brer Hugh!"

It was wise advice, for just now Hugh was in a mood of discontent and perplexity. He felt there was a slight breach with his mother — a most unusual circumstance in his hitherto happy life. He loved her deeply; and had always paid her the greatest deference, although her social and very conservative views clashed with the new ideas that were just then fermenting in his mind. The caste exclusiveness of Irish society, the arbitrary and absurd distinctions which were made so silently but so irrevocably, were totally at variance with his ideas of freedom and the larger democratic spirit of the student-class to which he belonged; and he had a dim presentiment

that sooner or later, very disagreeable differences of opinion, if not a total rupture with his mother, were inevitable.

He returned from the railway station, whither he had accompanied his young friend; and he came home by a circuitous walk, hoping that his mother would deem the hour too late to open up a disagreeable subject. In this he was mistaken. After tea, Maud was peremptorily ordered to bed, and Mrs. Ireton after fortifying herself with a glance at the *Peerage and Baronetage*, said in a calm judicial tone:—

“It would be very unwise, my dear Hugh, for mothers to look too closely into the trifling adventures that daily occur in the lives of young men, or to inquire into — well, trifling indiscretions —”

“I beg your pardon, mother,” said Hugh, seeing a weak point here. “Have you discovered many indiscretions in my course of conduct hitherto?”

“N—no,” said Mrs. Ireton. Then, like a skilful diplomatist, “it is because your life has been hitherto spotless and honourable, that I am so anxious to keep it so.”

“Quite right. But do you not think that that very fact is a fair guarantee that the future shall not belie the past?”

“I quite agree with you, my dear boy. But, there is such a thing as inexperience, without the least trace of guilt. And inexperience often places young men in positions from which a libertine may escape.”

“I don’t quite understand,” said Hugh meekly. “Perhaps, mother, we had better let matters rest here. We have only touched on general propositions, in which I am sure we agree.”

“Unfortunately, I cannot let matters rest,” said Mrs. Ireton, with another glance at the open book. “Let me be very explicit and say at once that your accidental meeting with these Lucas people must not lead to a further or closer acquaintance.”

“I am not anxious for it, nor shall I seek it,” said Hugh, hotly. “But so peremptory an order demands some explanation. I reached my majority two years ago.”

"My word, a mother's warning," said Mrs. Ireton, with some little feeling, "should be enough. But, it is quite sufficient to say now, that these people do not belong to our set."

"I hate that abominable expression," said Hugh, angrily. "*Our set! our set!* Did the eternal God draw a line around this Crescent, and declare that here alone were his elect?"

Mrs. Ireton was silent. She was shocked and pained. She twirled her pince-nez in her fingers, and said, after a time, but with an air of pity and compassion:—

"It is the first time you have used profane language in my presence, and exhibited signs of temper. May I hope it will be the last?"

"You provoked me, mother," said Hugh, somewhat ashamed of the emotion into which he had been betrayed. "I confess modern ideas into which I have been inducted by reading and association are totally at variance with this antiquated conservatism."

"Then you mean you have become a Socialist? or, at least, that you lean to Socialism?"

"That depends on the meaning you attach to the word. But, as this is not a college debating society, we must not go further. Have you any other instructions, mother, as to my course of conduct?"

"None," she said curtly. "It is not customary in good society to enter into the details of family histories, which will not bear examination. I cannot make further explanations. A mother's word should be enough for her child."

Hugh rose up hastily, and went out. Then, as hastily remembering himself, he rushed back, and bending one knee to the ground, he took his mother's hand and kissed it respectfully. Then strode out again. The mother closed the Peerage and Baronetage, and sat musing in the twilight that was now fast gathering. Somehow, she felt that there was just now no consolation in that great book. And Hugh Ireton strode up and down beneath the hedge of escalonia, a puzzled and distracted man.

V

THE ADMIRAL'S GARDEN PARTY

THE only visitors that ever called at Glendarragh House were the vicar and his wife. The former called as a matter of duty to an afflicted parishioner; the latter, through an utter contempt for the studied and persistent aloofness of society. She belonged to a county family, and had therefore all the individualism and independence of a recognised position. And she could afford to scorn the strict scrupulosity with which the *bourgeois* gentility of the neighbourhood observed the conventionalities of life. Naturally, too, she was not only independent in her thoughts and bearing, but exceedingly good-natured. Hence, she affected plainness in dress and speech, spoke without a trace of accent, and quietly accomplished her works of charity in her neighbourhood without fear of being misunderstood. It was taken for granted that she was not only mistress, but supreme ruler in the vicarage. Some jealous members of the congregation hinted that possibly she was the author of the sermons which the vicar read falteringly and hesitatingly every Sunday from the little pulpit in the narrow and almost deserted and ivy-darkened little church. But this could not be the case, for her Catholic servants (and she would have none other) averred that whenever there was a moment's hesitation on the part of the vicar about some measure of parochial or domestic economy, his lady at once took the reins of power, which, indeed, she never dropped, and used to say:

"Go back to your books, John Crosthwaite, and leave this to me. You may know your Isaac Barrow, or your Jeremy Taylor better, but this is a matter of business."

So it was quite clear that inasmuch as John Crosthwaite did know these great lights of Anglicanism, there was no necessity of appealing to his wife for literary help. In fact, it was well known that he was, in the best sense of the word, a scholar. He had a degree from his own college, which he never used, at least ostentatiously. His bishop always called him "Doctor"; everyone else, his brother clerics, his wife, and all friends called him, "John"; the peasantry and labourers, "the minister" or "the parson." But he was universally beloved. He trod on no man's corns by excessive learning; he flattered everyone's vanity by his exceeding humility. He was one of those delightful beings who, with much knowledge, retained all the simplicity and unconsciousness of a child, never seeing a blunder, never blushing at a solecism, always humble, suave, deprecatory; and everyone loved him, because he appealed to their pity and never challenged their pride. The farmers' sons in his neighbourhood, Catholics all, would leave their own harvest work unfinished to cut or thresh his corn; and, stranger still, they worked from dawn to dark for him with no greater stimulant than tea or coffee, whilst porter was the invariable accompaniment and reward of their own generosity elsewhere. Like all good people, he was a little trying sometimes. He was an amateur botanist, and would spend days on the cliffs seeking some new marine plant. He had a glorious collection of butterflies; and gave liberally to the gossoons of the neighbourhood to secure their services in trapping the gaudy beauties.

"It is demoralising and cruel," said his wife.

"My dear, 'tis science," said John.

But his one great hobby was astronomy. He had a beautiful, poetic, unscientific knowledge of the stars; and, having read somewhere that a mere doctor, or merchant, had with a four-inch lens actually discovered a new planet, he was consumed with the ambition of handing down his name to posterity as the discoverer of some celestial wonder. "The Crosthwaite Nebula," or the

"Crosthwaite Gemini," or the "Crosthwaite Comet," was perpetually before his eyes; and he had had one severe attack of pneumonia, and two or three milder bronchial attacks in consequence. As he grew older and his sight became impaired from the use of the telescope, he would sometimes requisition the sharper eyes of the village boys, giving them minute directions as to place and perspective, and ample remuneration for their vicarious labours. But he found that this method, if it enlarged his field of discovery, also confused it. And sometimes he was at a loss to reconcile his astronomical maps with the wonderful discoveries made, night after night, by his assistants.

"Now," he would say to one of a group of idle lads, who knew that the parson had excellent bottled stout, and who strolled round the vicarage two or three times a week, "be the way of no harrum," "now, count carefully, my boy, the little specks of light around the great planet, and let me know how many are there."

"Begobs, yer 'anner, if there's wan of thim there's tin, all bobbing round like corks in the wather."

"No, no, that cannot be," the vicar would say in his gentle way. "Try again."

It would then dawn on the young astronomer that it wasn't exactly number was wanted, although he was prepared to accommodate the vicar as far as he pleased in that direction. It was necessary to proceed cautiously.

"Wan, — two, the-ree — four —"

"Exactly. And now, my boy, are they all on one side, or are they evenly divided around the planet?"

"Begor, no, yer 'anner — wait a moment! there's three of them to the nor' and three more est —"

"No, no, that would make six! And I'm sure there are only four."

"Of course, yer 'anner. Faith my sight is wandhering, and I didn't tech a dhrop today. Of course there are only four. Wan to the nor', and wan to the south, and wan — no, two, est."

"Quite so," the vicar would echo dubiously. "They vary their positions. Come in, boys, the night is cold."

And Mrs. Crosthwaite, with very rigid notions of the necessity of Total Abstinence, had not the heart to refuse the key of the pantry.

The vicar and his good lady had many and many a conference about Miriam and her father — conferences which were mostly conjectures, but which invariably ended with the rather unconjugal exclamation: —

"John Crosthwaite, you are a fool!"

And John would smile. He had great faith in the superior worldly wisdom of his spouse; and he did not grudge it, because had he not the higher wisdom that comes from knowledge and science?

But they both came to the same conclusion, that there was some great pathos surrounding these mysterious lives, and that they deserved great pity, which it was the bounden duty of themselves to give.

"Society has given them the cold shoulder," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, in her matter-of-fact way. "All the more reason why we should befriend them." And she determined to defy Society, partly out of good-nature, partly because she knew she could afford to do so. Hence, Miriam was not only a frequent guest at the vicarage, where the old man treated her with a kind of half-courtly homage, and wholly paternal sympathy, and his wife treated her partly as mother, partly as companion; but on the few festive occasions that brightened the monotony of the old ivy-clad parsonage and its quaint, secluded garden, Miriam was invariably invited. She went once, but found everyone so strange and distant and supercilious that she entreated her kind friend not to expose her to such social trials again. Mrs. Crosthwaite did not like this.

"Defy them, child," she would say. "There is a lot of the spaniel in human nature. Kick the prostrate thing and it will fawn; rub it, and it will bite. Believe me, my dear, if you had only one stand-up fight with Mrs. Rolleston, it would be all over. She would go down in a

trice. 'Tis their nature, my dear; rolling stones all out. Her grandfather was a grocer in Winthrop street."

But Miriam, fierce enough where more serious principles were at stake, declined to enter the lists with this leader of society. She preferred the garden, the beach, the cliff, and a book.

But Mrs. Crosthwaite was not going to be balked in this way. Miriam should come out and become a member of society. So it was determined; and so was Mrs. Crosthwaite launched on a perilous and anxious enterprise, which should be a great and permanent success, or an egregious failure. A great garden-party was to be given at the Admiralty House in Queenstown, and thither she and her young charge should go. There was no trouble about obtaining the requisite invitations; and then Mrs. Crosthwaite argued thus with her spouse:—

"Now," she said, "this odious Mrs. Rolleston can't be there to whisper and nod and suggest. The Admiral's wife is so much above all these local *bourgeoisie* that, like myself, she can afford to overlook distinctions. Her only consideration will be to secure the most attractive and charming young people around her, so as to make the party not only a success but a pleasure. Then, these naval fellows do not care a brass farthing about our provincial grades and caste-worship. They'll swarm like bees around Miriam, and oh! won't all the young eligibles faint with envy?"

"But — but —" said John Crosthwaite, dubiously.

"But what?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite, sharply, at such a sceptical exclamation.

"I mean, my dear," said the vicar, rubbing his chin in a meditative way, "that perhaps, you know, some rude young lady —"

"What can the most malignant and ill-natured young person do?" said his spouse, angrily.

"They might, you know — that is, you know better than I. But it would be dreadful if poor Miriam were annoyed or 'disappointed.'"

"John Crosthwaite," said the lady, "you are a fool."

"I suppose so, my dear," said John meekly. "But the poor child has so much suffering at home, that I should not like to see new trials heaped on her head."

"John Crosthwaite, you are a good man," said his wife. "But you may trust me."

"And so I do; and so I do, my dear. I know it will all come right."

Yet she had some misgivings — not the least was, how would Miriam accept this invitation; and would she not promptly reject it? There was but one way of solving that difficulty, and that was the way of the Romans with the Sabine women. Mrs. Crosthwaite would carry Miriam into society in spite of herself.

And so, when the morning came, a beautiful autumn morning, with just the faintest smell of frost in the air, and with it the promise of a glorious day, the good chaperon drove up to Glendarragh House, threw the pony's reins to a groom, knocked fiercely, and, after the usual salutations and inquiries after the invalid, who was bending, chilled, over a blazing wood fire, she promptly said: —

"You must manage without Miriam today, Mr. Lucas. I have determined to give her a whole day's holiday. The doctor will be here in the afternoon, and Margaret will do the rest. Don't expect us before evening."

The poor invalid was about to make a feeble and querulous protest; but he was afraid of the lady; so he said faintly: —

"By all means! By all means! Mrs. Crosthwaite. Indeed it was in my own thoughts for some days; but I didn't see how it could be managed."

"Leave the management to me," she said. "Come, Miriam; that dress will do admirably. Put on your pale-blue blouse; and bring heavy wraps against the evening dews."

So far the ruse was successful.

It was a gay, nay, a brilliant party, that was gathered in the Admiralty grounds that beautiful autumn after-

noon. And the gallant old officer who, with his wife, presided, looked happy and radiant, as with old-time chivalrous courtesy he passed up and down the ranks of the gay company, and bowed and smiled and welcomed his guests with genuine hospitality. The band of the *Revenge* was hidden away beneath some heavy copper-beeches, and music and flowers and gay dresses, and all that makes life such a dream to the young, contributed to the splendours and pleasures of the afternoon. A gleam of red here and there, where an officer from the garrison on Fort Westmoreland passed rapidly forward to offer his respects to the Admiral's wife, was instantly dulled by the dark-blue uniform of the naval and artillery officers. The latter looked stiff, as if they were standing by their guns. The captain, lieutenants and midshipmen, were quite at home. This was their entertainment. The rest were their guests.

When Mrs. Crosthwaite and Miriam entered the grounds, they were at first unobserved in the throng. A few acquaintances saluted the vicar's lady, and stared at the singular beauty of Miriam. She had begun to feel embarrassed and almost irritated when Hugh Ireton, who had been talking to a group of ladies, stepped hastily forward, and with a smile of pleasure, held out his hand. Miriam flushed with a moment's involuntary delight. Then the thought of what she had overheard from Anstie in the little chapel came back to her, and, on a sudden impulse of dislike and resentment, she bowed stiffly, her hands by her side, and passed on. Mrs. Ireton, watching her son closely, saw the little gesture, and with a mother's pride resented it. For the moment, she could not conjecture who this strange beauty was. And turning to a friend, she said with suppressed anger:—

"Who is that stranger in white, who has just passed in?"

"Don't know. But I think she has come with that odious Mrs. Crosthwaite."

Even then Mrs. Ireton did not guess the identity; but,

watching an opportunity, she drew her son aside and interrogated him.

"It is Miss Lucas," he said, simply, "of whom you heard me speak."

"She has cut you dead," says Mrs. Ireton, half pleased at the abrupt close of such an acquaintanceship, half angry at the slight to her son.

"Yes," he said, simply. "I cannot understand. She may have forgotten, and resented such a sudden intrusion."

"You have a Christian and forgiving spirit," said his mother. "But I do hope you will consider what is due to *me*."

She spoke in a whisper, but it was weighted with angry determination.

Meantime, Mrs. Crosthwaite and her charge had passed on through the crowd, and after their greetings from the Admiral and his lady, they found themselves, to the intense delight of Mrs. Crosthwaite, and the embarrassment of Miriam, the centre of the brightest circle on the grounds. The former looked around her with calm pride. Miriam, frightened, but with an assumed air of perfect coolness and ease, chatted brightly with a group of officers who had detached themselves from other circles, and were staring, with undisguised admiration, at the freshness and simple beauty of the young girl. It was not hard to interpret their thoughts. The older officers treated her with a kind of respectful homage, yet on terms of equality. The younger men, who had as yet but little gold lace on their sleeves, and who fidgetted with their white gloves nervously, seemed to be dreaming of far-off times, when, after perilous voyages on unknown seas, they might ensnare such a bird of Paradise, and keep her for ever in a golden cage. And one or two thought, that it was only out of the smoke of action, and the crash of shells, and the leaning over into the deep of some great leviathan, they could win a smile from so fair a lady, or finally possess her. And, all the time, jealous eyes were watching her curiously, and jealous lips were weaving

snare. For, as the day wore on, a strange chill came down on the sunshine; and, as her male admirers had, one by one, departed, and she had to seek the company of ladies, she found herself suddenly deserted. Mrs. Crosthwaite was not to be seen. Miriam turned around, and seemed to wish to join a tennis-party. She was left standing, shamed and unnoticed. She approached a tea-table. A young gentleman, with a cup in his hand, was bending down to speak to a lady. He saw Miriam, but didn't move to help her. She flushed with pain and disappointment. A young servant came over, pityingly, and procured her a seat; and noticing her distress, was assiduous in her humble and generous attentions. But it was clear the cloud had come down. She had half expected it. Cold looks, and whisperings, and averted faces were everywhere around her. In the distance Hugh Ireton was watching her intently. She would be grateful now if he approached her. He was burning with the wish to befriend her. He would have gladly braved his mother's anger as she watched him with lynx eyes from a cool recess, and saw the little tragedy which her own evil ingenuity had set in motion. But he feared another slight, and dared not approach her. And, after a long interval of anguish, Miriam arose with a bursting heart, and with bitter hatred against this cold, glittering, evil-minded thing, called Society, and sought momentary refuge in the shelter of the shaded walks far down beneath where the semaphore waves his messages to the deep. She was about to enter what appeared to be a little cool grotto here, when she was arrested by the sounds of a child's voice; and saw before her, sitting on a rock, a little child who, with her dolls, was mimicking the manners of her elders above. It was amusing; and helped to drive away the bitterness which now consumed Miriam like a sheath of fire.

"After all," she said, "it is but the comedy of life. And neither the child nor her seniors can raise it to the dignity of tragedy. I must try to smile at both."

Her smile caught the eye of the child, who blushed with the fear of the sudden apparition, then smiled back in turn, and waited.

"You were singing," said Miriam. "Do not allow me interrupt you. Please sing on that pretty song, and I shall listen."

She had entered the grotto and sat close to the child, who remained silent, and took up and arranged her dolls as if to depart.

"Don't go," said Miriam. "I shouldn't have disturbed you. You shall remain and I shall go." And she rose to depart.

"Don't go," said the child, meekly.

"Then you will sing for me. What was your song? 'The Lady of the Lea'?"

"It is not my song," said the child. "It is Arthur's."

"Arthur's? And who might Arthur be? A boy-lover?"

"No. Arthur is Mr. Ashley; and him and brother Hugh were away — away a whole day, ever so far away. An' they came to a great big castle, ever so far away; an' they saw a great beautiful lady, all white, with big blue eyes, like Kitty here, and long, gold hair. An' when they came home Mamma was very angry because they were late; and Lizzie was cross; but I went down to meet them; and Arthur was singing: —

'She was young and she was fair
That Lady of the Lea,'

and looking back at Hugh and laughing. And I asked Brother Hugh: and I sad: Brother Hugh, you keep nothing back from your little sister. Brother Hugh, will you marry the Lady of the Lea —"

"Maud! Maud! Maud!" cried a voice in alarm. "Where can that child be? I should never have let her come. Maud! Maud!"

And Mrs. Ireton and her maid-servant entered the grotto. She gave one swift look of scorn and anger at

Miriam, then, snatching up the dolls, she bade the servant to bring the child away at once, and without another word departed.

Ashamed and angry, Miriam sat still for a moment.

"And so I *am* a pariah!" she said. "Well, be it so! I shall not enter this nest of asps again."

She met Mrs. Crosthwaite at the entrance to the grounds. That excellent lady, seeing that Miriam was an object of universal attention, had slipped quietly away to do some shopping in the town; and, on her return, had found most of the guests departed, and those remaining rather unsociable and discontented. She felt one swift emotion of alarm for her young charge; but threw it aside as altogether out of place.

"Miriam is the reigning beauty," the good woman said. "This will be a red-letter day in her homely, monotonous life, poor girl!"

She started on seeing the drawn face and the staring eyes, ever so slightly bloodshot, of Miriam.

"May we go home?" said the latter, quietly.

"By all means, child," said her kind friend. She felt that something had occurred, but forbore questioning all through that dreary journey homeward. Then, at length, as they approached Glendarragh, Miriam spoke. She told calmly, and in an even, unconcerned voice, all that had occurred.

"I know my position now," she concluded, with a little gasp. "I am *tabu* — why, I do not know. One further favour you will do me?"

"What is it?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite, who was more disturbed than she had ever been before.

"You, too, must give me up," said Miriam. "I want to be alone."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said the good old lady. "Why should I give you up, child?"

"Because I have a devil," said Miriam, in the same cold, unimpassioned voice.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Crosthwaite. But she felt a

strange chill; and she said to her husband that evening at tea:—

“John Crosthwaite, I have made a discovery.”

“What is it, my dear?” said the vicar.

“There is a fool in this establishment,” she replied.

“But it isn’t you, John!”

VI

THE ARRIVAL OF MR. HOLTHSWORTH

HER father was not alone when Miriam entered his room. Instead of being stooped over the fire in his usual posture, with feeble hands extended to the flames, he sat upright, and was engaged in a brisk conversation with a stranger. The latter might have been about fifty years old, although in his thick black hair not a mark of age was observable, and his smooth features showed not a trace of the progress of the years; for the upright lines that deepened into a frown upon his forehead, and one or two wrinkles round his mouth, might be indicative of character as well as of age. He spoke blandly, too, but with a certain precision as if measuring his words; and all that he was saying was pleasant to the hearer, if one were to judge by his own smile. Yet Mr. Lucas, though vitalised into new life by the visit, was not altogether at ease; and although he assumed an air of cheerfulness corresponding with that of his visitor, a furtive, half-frightened look from time to time, showed that he did not altogether regard the visit as a friendly one. Yet, he, himself, had solicited it.

Mr. Holthsworth's journey had been a pleasant one. The trains were punctual, the day was fine, and the driver of the car from the railway station to Glendarragh was communicative. He was all the more so from the fact, which he speedily discovered, that his fare was a perfect stranger in these parts, and was a guileless and credulous city man, who, unacquainted with rustic ways, was prepared to accept tales of the imagination with simple faith. He manifested no surprise on being told that the

district was in a disturbed condition, and that the life of an agent or a landlord was not worth a moment's purchase; that, therefore, it was at the extreme peril of his own life he had condescended to drive a perfect stranger through such dangerous byways. He even showed his hat, which had been perforated with a bullet a few weeks before, as he drove a landlord to the station. It appeared, too, that the people were so lawless that they mutilated the unhappy horses that were so unpatriotic as to carry the enemies of their country, and he volunteered to show Mr. Holthsworth how his own horse had lost his tongue, cut out by these unscrupulous and savage rebels. To his surprise, his fare accepted the invitation to examine the horse's mouth; but as the latter obstinately refused such ungentle treatment, the truth of the statement remains unverified but also uncontradicted to this day. It was, therefore, a genuine surprise to this highly imaginative native when, on arriving at Glendarragh House, his fare carefully calculated the number of miles he had travelled, as carefully doled out sixpence for each mile, and, on threats of law being made, after sundry profane exclamations by the driver, coolly handed him a card, on which was written: —

Mr. Augustus Holthsworth,
Notary,
46 A, Dame Street,
Dublin.

And so we have learned the name, profession, and address of the stranger; and perhaps some slight indication of character.

Miriam started back on seeing him; and it was more than a start of surprise. At least Mr. Holthsworth understood it as a gesture of aversion. Not that he showed this, or reciprocated it in the least. On the contrary, he rose, and after an involuntary start of surprise at seeing the fully-formed and perfected beauty of her whom he had only known as a pretty, if spoiled, child, he said, with an air of deference and gentleness: —

"Have I the pleasure of seeing my old playfellow, Myrrha?"

"Yes, Holthsworth. Miriam, you haven't forgotten Mr. Holthsworth? He is an old and valued friend."

Miriam took frigidly the extended hand, and murmured her surprise at the unexpected visit.

"But not unpleasant, nor unwelcome, I hope, Miss Lucas?" murmured Mr. Holthsworth in return. "Please say, not unpleasant, nor unpleasant, Miss Lucas!"

"Oh, by no means, Sir!" said Miriam, still standing. "Any friend of father's is welcomed by me."

"Then you forget, or repudiate our former friendship?" he said. "That is unfortunate, or — ungrateful. If I had known this I should have kept that interesting driver, and gone back, disconsolately to Dublin."

The sneer was not lost on Edwin Lucas, who fidgetted under it; nor on Miriam, who coldly said, turning to her father: —

"Has Mr. Holthsworth dined, father? Or shall I order dinner?"

Mr. Holthsworth thought this a curious and altogether superfluous question. It was barely half-past six o'clock; and that dinner, as a matter of course, should be placed upon the table at seven o'clock seemed to him such a daily certainty that he was as much surprised as if he were asked, had he washed his face that morning, or would he go to bed that night. But he reasoned that city habits, perhaps, had been abandoned in that remote country district; and that, if he had chosen to pass beyond the boundaries of civilisation, he must take the consequences.

"You really must not think," he said, "of altering or disturbing your arrangements on my account. I had an early dinner; and will be content with a very light supper."

Miriam was about to leave the room when he said: —

"I have so many things to say to you, Myrrha, so many messages from friends in Dublin! You don't know how well you are remembered, though you were but a child —"

"Not now, please," said Miriam. "You may have some business matters to transact with father. After supper."

"It is a command!" said Mr. Holthsworth, with humble deference. But for the next hour, whilst he affected to talk business with Edwin Lucas, his thoughts ran over this strange and striking transformation.

"I expected to see a girl," he reflected, "and here is a woman! A hoyden, and behold a self-possessed lady of the world! Who'd have thought it? I was thinking of a freckled rustic, uncouth and unformed, with all kinds of rural *gaucheries*, and *ecco!* Lady Clara Vere de Vere! Well, young lady, I won't cut my throat for you. But, by Jove, under all this mannerism and dignity there is a devil somewhere! How could it be otherwise? The fathers have eaten sour grapes, etc., etc. And what of the mother? Ha, my fine lady, there lies your fate and your future! I wonder does she know it? Or has this poor imbecile revealed it? Let me see?"

"She reminds me marvellously of her mother," he said to Edwin Lucas. "The same eyes, the same hair, the very turn of the chin, the very curve of the cheek — does she remember her mother, Edwin?"

"Hush!" said the invalid in a frightened voice. "We never speak of that here."

"But why not?" urged the notary. "Don't you know what the imagination of a young girl is, and that she fancies all kinds of possibilities, far in advance of the reality?"

"That would be impossible," said the invalid, feebly.

"Impossible? Not at all!" insinuated the notary. "Your weak health exaggerates. You had formed too high an idea of womanhood; and your reality did not correspond with your ideal. That's all."

He knew he had his listener on the rack, but he went on mercilessly: —

"Men of the world — you know you were never a man of the world, Edwin — take large views of these things

and are prepared for disappointments. So, when eventualities arise —”

“Yes! Yes! For God’s sake, spare me, Holthsworth! Why the devil did you come here?”

“There, now you are excited; and excitement is always bad. But, take my advice, and tell Myrrha all —”

“Not for worlds!” said the poor invalid. “Besides what is the all? No one knoweth, but God!”

“All the more reason for preventing your child’s mind from being racked with surmises —”

“No! No! Besides, there is nothing to tell. She beggared me, ruined me, left me — that’s all!”

“But that is not all, my dear friend,” said the notary, insinuatingly placing his hand on the other’s knee. “She never made reparation, never wrote —”

“She did her best, poor thing,” said Lucas, softening under the spell of tender memories. “All I had was hers; and is, wherever fate has placed her. She at least retained this house for her child. Nominally mine, it is in reality, my . . .” “the word choked him, “my wife’s.”

And the man of the world went and ate a hearty supper. He had found exactly what he had sought.

Yet, it was a dreary entertainment, and so the city man, accustomed to pleasanter surroundings, felt. The great gloomy, unfurnished house; the corners of the large diningroom wrapped in mysterious shadows; the play of the solitary lamp on the ceiling and on the walls, where the figures were exaggerated and dislocated into all kinds of weird and ghastly shapes; the chill of the October evening, which was not dissipated by the great wood fire that burned in the large fire-place; the shrunken aspect of the poor invalid, who, now relieved from the cerebral excitement of this unwelcome visit, had lapsed into his usual incongruities of speech; the cold, contemptuous stateliness of this girl, whom he had only known as a plaything — all seemed to freeze the spirits, never very exuberant, but always restrained into pleasant formalism, of the Dublin notary. Yet, he did not show it. He

soliloquised bitterly, while he spoke amiably, and with a pleasant assumption of great deference and humility.

"If this is the heritage, and that the heiress," he thought, "you, Augustus Holthsworth, have had your journey for nothing. Who could live in such a ruin, and with such a spectre? She makes me shiver all over; and I am not much given that way. Yet, in summer, as a shooting-lodge? and she would be a dainty figurehead over my mahogany in Dublin! Well, here I am, Augustus Holthsworth, and here I remain for twenty-four hours at least, unless —"

"You have no idea," he said to Miriam, "how they interest themselves about you in Dublin. Some say you have grown plain and ugly, on the general principle that child-beauties are fleeting; some conjecture about your future, and speculate about your marrying a great country squire or landlord, riding to hounds, and becoming a regular Lady Bountiful, dispensing blankets and camomile-tea to old ladies; some —"

He could not help dropping into sarcasm; it was his nature. Edwin Lucas, with all his feebleness, resented it.

"Let us change the subject," he said. "I dare say Miriam and I are as forgotten in Dublin as we would wish to be."

"I assure you, you are completely mistaken," said Holthsworth.

"No matter! Is that old gamester in the Exchange yet?"

"Who?"

"Oh, I cannot remember names. What's that, Miriam, they drive through the ground?"

"Shovels? Spades? Picks?" hazarded Holthsworth.

"No! No! No! I cannot remember. What the horses pull, you know, through the — what you call?"

"Oh! Ploughs?"

"Exactly. Old Plowman. Is he in the Exchange yet?"

"No. Made his pile, enjoyed it, and died. He thought a lot of you, Edwin. 'Ah, Lucas! Lucas!' he used say,

‘that’s the man! that’s the financier! He can buy and sell us all. He should be Chancellor of the Exchequer. Depend upon it, he has the shekels somewhere. Where could they go? And his wife’s enormous fortune?’”

Edwin Lucas looked at his daughter. She was imperturbable, her eyes cast down on the table, and apparently unheeding all that was said. Lucas looked pitifully at Holthsworth, as if pleading with him to desist.

“Yes,” continued the latter, calmly cutting a salad into minute fragments, “Plowman gone! Sharwood gone! Manly emigrated after a hopeless smash! All that you knew, and that remembered you in your — well — happy — no! prosperous — no! in your — past professional days, are vanished. New faces, newer manners, other times!”

“I thought,” said Miriam, with quiet sarcasm, “that you mentioned all the minute and affectionate inquiries of our friends?”

“Ah! now, that is too finical, Myrrha —”

“I prefer ‘Miriam,’ if you please.”

“But I don’t,” he said, with calm effrontery, which made her fear the man. It assumed not only a superiority, but some rights of possession. “Our good Lord Byron, a much maligned man, and a too little appreciated poet, has consecrated the name ‘Myrrha’ unto all time; and ‘Myrrha’ it *must* remain. Besides, Miriam means, ‘sea of bitterness’ and how could that apply to you?”

“And ‘Myrrha’ means?” said the young girl forgetfully. It was a step down from her dignity.

“All that is sweet and beautiful,” he said, smiling and bowing.

“Father, Mr. Holthsworth might like a cigar on the terrace?” said the offended girl.

“Thanks, very much,” said the unabashed notary. “A cigar — and a moment’s reflection!”

She took no notice, but left the room.

It was a thick, dark night. No light, and no sound except the monotone of the waves, heard from afar, or

their closer thunder on the beach below the village. The terrace was wrapped in blackness except in one spot where the faint lamp of the diningroom threw a streamer of light on the rough pebbles, and the great rude stones, sculptured into fantastic forms by the sea, and which took the place of statues or urns near the great limestone steps. Holthsworth's cigar made quite a halo of brightness around him as he walked up and down, crunching the rough stones and thinking of many things. There was an eerie, unwholesome feeling about the whole place that made him heartily wish himself back in his Dublin club, or in his own comfortable library. He was not used to this kind of thing; for at Malahide or Greystones, if you had this savage sea for a neighbour, ah, well! you had the well-lighted hotel, the perfect dinner, the gracious society; and, if you did care to enjoy an after-dinner cigar, you had an old chum, or a new pleasant acquaintance with you. And then the City was so near. But here — he pulled the collar of his greatcoat higher on his neck and shuddered. Then, he became aware of some sort of figure that suddenly leaped out of the darkness, and disappeared in deeper darkness. It crossed his path, like some wild beast, again and again — a low, crouching figure, that seemed like a great, black dog, rushing by him, and brushing his very garments. He could not understand it. He hoped to see it emerge into the faint light from the diningroom; but it was only in the thick darkness that it seemed to cross and recross and hide itself in the shrubbery beneath. Once or twice it stumbled against him, and almost threw him down. He whistled at it, called it 'Carlo,' 'Caesar,' and other doggish names; but the thing came not nearer. Then he cursed it, and beginning to feel the weird loneliness of the place creep into his heart until he became half superstitious, he threw away his cigar, and was about to enter the hall, when Miriam stood by him.

"Father is asleep," she said. "Can I have a word with you?"

His heart leaped at the suggestion. It was just a change from her cold superciliousness of an hour ago. It was an appeal *ad misericordiam*, expressed rather in tone than language. He was so surprised he could not gather his thoughts together. He muttered:

"With great pleasure!"

And then he thought —

"This girl is playing a part. Such a sudden *volte face*! Is she afraid of her father? Or, is there something between them that is secret and mysterious?"

He stepped back upon the gravel, and, as Miriam followed him, he said, with some tenderness: —

"Myrrha, the night is cold. It is freezing. Go back and get some wraps."

"I am quite protected," she said. He heard her voice quivering in the darkness. He would have liked to see her face.

They walked up and down for some time in embarrassing silence. He knew she was trying to compose her words, and to steady her voice. At last she stopped, and said: —

"I want to ask you one question. It is one on which my whole life depends; and what is more — my entire happiness. You are at liberty to answer it, or not."

She stopped for a moment, and he was so eager to hear he feared to interrupt her with inane words.

"What is my mother's history?" she said.

It was just the thing that was farthest from his mind at the moment, and he was so disappointed that he was only too glad to temporise. He knew it would make her unhappy.

"You have made a great mistake in your preliminary remarks," he said, as if to disabuse her mind of a false idea, on which she was building up a woeful future. "Your life and happiness are perfectly independent of what has occurred in the past —"

She didn't like to offend him by too abrupt questioning, so she said: —

"You should know better! Events and lives less

closely strung than mine and my mother's have had effects on both for good or ill."

"True. But, so far as you are concerned, your mother's relations with society and your good father cannot have the least effect on you."

"You are mistaken; or you are deceptive," she said, bluntly. "Only this very day I experienced in bitterness and anguish how much a family secret, or a family stain, can affect us all."

"Where?" he asked, with curiosity.

"It makes little matter," she said, bitterly. "There is an abstract spectre, called Society, that can make its presence and its evil customs bitterly felt; and there are men and women who have the hearts of wild beasts, and the poison of asps beneath their tongues."

"I know it," he said, as if claiming the sympathy of experience in return; "no one better. I, too, have been in the toils. But, Myrrha," he said, almost tenderly, "you must learn to despise this wretched thing. Why should the talk and idle gossip of a few old catamounts affect you so strongly?"

"I suppose, because I am not used to it," she said. "I have never received aught from these poor serfs" — she pointed towards the village — "whom your society so much despises, but reverence and affection. I shall not put my hand into that nest of asps again!"

He saw then how and why she was suffering.

"You cannot avoid it," he said. "You must become inured to it. Its votaries must be martyrs."

"But I shall not be a votary," she said, angrily.

"You cannot help it. You cannot walk through life alone."

"Why?" she cried, stopping suddenly and facing him.

"Because you are only mortal, like the rest. You have but one other alternative."

"What?" she said sharply.

"To meet with someone who will guard and protect you and shield you against the 'slings and arrows' — one

who will give his life for yours, and whose every wish and care shall be for your welfare and happiness; one who —”

Something in the tone of voice in which he spoke struck her as peculiar. She drew back, and stopping suddenly, said: —

“You haven’t answered my question?”

“What? I beg pardon. I had forgotten.”

“I asked you about my mother’s history,” she said.

“Some other time,” he replied, conclusively.

She left him.

He took a few more turns on the gravelled terrace, completely out of humour with himself.

“It was a tactical mistake, and premature,” he said.

“How could I have been so stupid?”

Then he entered the large hall to find Edwin Lucas feebly mounting the stairs, his daughter helping him from step to step. The invalid turned around on hearing the footstep in the hall, and said: —

“Good-night, Holthsworth!”

“Good-night,” said the notary. “By the way, what kind of mastiff do you keep around the place? There is a land-beast, or sea-beast prowling around outside all the evening?”

“There must be a mistake,” said Edwin Lucas. “We keep no dog, do we, Miriam?”

“No, father,” she said.

“Then the place is haunted,” said Holthsworth.

VII

THE CRY OF CLEENA

THOUGH Mr. Holthsworth retired to rest, he did not sleep. It was not his conscience which troubled him. That he had long ago hushed into silence by the more imperious cry of business. "Business" stifled everything. It was the ruling deity, at whose feet such minor things as principle, conscience, etc., grovelled and slept. But, there was an uncanny feeling about everything that made him uneasy. He began to believe in spirits. And, when he extinguished his candle, and darkness was all around him, except a faint glimmer as of starlight through the one window of his room, he felt still more uneasy, and sleep finally fled. He was angry with himself for such weakness. He argued, reasoned, scolded; but in vain. It was with a certain sense of relief from mere self-contempt that he heard a strange sound at the window as of garments brushing against it, or a soft body crouching near it; and a long, low, half-stifled moan, as of some one in pain. He waited and watched. Again, after a few minutes, he heard the same soft brushing sound, and again a melancholy, long-drawn moan as of a beast that had been hurt. He at once lit his candle, and looked. This time he saw a face at the window. It seemed human; but he doubted it. It was a long, pale face with the matted hair streaming down at both sides — a face, idiotic but curious — rightly or wrongly, he thought it malicious. He rushed to fling up the window, but it resisted. With a violent effort, he at last succeeded, the glass crashing down upon him from the force he used; and he looked out. The leads of the great porch were just under his window, but there was no trace of any living thing there. The

rain-water lodged there was undisturbed. He listened for a passing footfall. But no sound came to his ears but the sound of the restless sea, far below beyond the village.

"I hope you slept well?" said Edwin Lucas, the following morning at breakfast.

"Very well, indeed," he said, sarcastically. "By the way, do you keep any wild beasts about the place for show?"

"Wild beasts? No," said his host, wonderingly.

"No apes, or gorillas, or semi-human things?"

"No," said Edwin Lucas, looking at his daughter.

"Do you take tea or coffee?" said Miriam.

"Coffee, please!" said Holthsworth, looking steadily at her.

"The carriage will be round at a quarter to eleven," said the host. "I suppose you are as strict a Church-goer as ever, Holthsworth?"

"Yes, yes! I never miss Church!" he replied.

"I cannot go," said the invalid feebly.

"Perhaps, Myrrha?" questioned Holthsworth.

"I have been to early celebration," said Miriam quietly.

So Mr. Holthsworth had to perform his devotions alone. How he discharged them is known best to himself. How he appeared to charitable or inquisitive eyes may be gathered from a conversation between the rector and his wife at luncheon after service.

"You noticed that distinguished stranger, my dear, under the pulpit?"

"I did," said his wife drily.

The vicar looked at his lady, as if not quite sure about his next assertion.

"He seemed very attentive to the — the — sermon," said the vicar.

"Very," echoed his wife.

"And, if I may judge, he seemed very recollected and pious."

"No doubt," said his wife.

"But, my dear, you seem doubtful. Don't you really think that he was all that he appeared?"

"John Crosthwaite," said his wife, "you are a good man, a scholar, and an astronomer. But you have not the gift of the 'discernment of spirits,' John. That man, unless my eyes and judgment deceive me, is a thorough and accomplished hypocrite."

As Holthsworth drove back to Glendarragh, he noticed a curious coppery colour in the south-west sky. Overhead, the sky was a grey, ashen colour, darkening into inky blackness. There was no sun, only that dull, grey light from the zenith to the horizon, that seems to hold, without shedding, the sunbeams it has caught. And there was a deep, low boom along the shore, as if the waters were lifted suddenly out of their torpor, and rounded into larger pressure on the sands.

"I hope it is not the foreshadowing of a storm," said Mr. Holthsworth. "It would be a dreadful place to be stormbound."

He consulted his driver. With the amiable politeness of his race, or perhaps with their sanguine forecastings of the future, the driver said:

"Niver fear, yer 'anner. 'Tis all for fine weather."

"I don't like that sky," said Mr. Holthsworth.

"Ah! niver mind that, yer 'anner," he replied. "Whinever you see that colour in the sky airy in the day, but not in the morning, 'tis a sign that you'll have at laste a week of fine weather."

So, too, apparently thought some of the village boys and girls, who, after Mass, had strolled down to the beach and were eagerly dividing into groups for the boats which some strong men were now pushing down along the smooth sand to launch for the pleasure parties. High up on the cliff, aged fishermen, lying flat on the green sward, were watching a great Atlantic liner, that a few miles from land, was sweeping down from Liverpool to gather up mails and passengers at Queenstown for the outward voyage. She was late; and apparently under

full steam, if one were to judge by her speed and the fierce churning of her screw blades. Sometimes, they drew the telescope around towards the south-west, and seemed to watch with some interest that strange sky-colour which was deepening there.

"Call me Davy," said old James Carroll, "if that's not as big a blow as ever we had round 'the Horn.'"

"And d'ye hear it?" said John Motherway, a well-tanned old salt. "I'm blessed if that isn't the *Cry of Cleena!*"

He bent his ear down to the turf, and listened. A strange, deep boom seemed to echo all along the coast — a low, subterranean sound, as of the sea in hollow caves, which it had cut with its eternal chiselling. It was not the sound of the breakers, although these, too, now thundered on the sands, or on the base of the cliffs. But something far different, and far away, as the mutter of a storm raging afar off, and approaching with sweeping and irresistible strength towards the heavens. The sea, too, so calm all the morning, now was fluted in deep round curves, yellow from the sky, and oily; and precipitated itself no longer in tiny waves, but in great round, shining breakers that echoed and thundered all along the coast.

"Call thim fools back," said Motherway, pointing to the heavy fishing-smacks, deeply laden with boys and girls, that were racing about half a mile from shore. Great shouts of laughter came shoreward from time to time, as the merry girls shouted to their champions, and waved their white handkerchiefs in triumph.

"There is no fear," said old Dave Ahern. "That storm won't break before night. It may blow away to the sud'dard."

"When Cleena cries, Sailors, be wise!" said Motherway. "Cleena never growled without biting."

The boats came back, however, and the villagers went home to their early tea. Just about five o'clock, Anstie Carroll, the village belle, too proud to be seen amongst

the common folk, strolled down leisurely. She wore her Sunday dress, and, as she walked alone on the hard sands, she made a pretty figure against the darkening sky. So thought her admirer, Declan Ahern, who, in some way, contrived to slip from home, and joined Anstie on the beach. Now, Anstie happened to be in a pouty mood. It was one of her many attractive ways of securing and chaining attention. And she had been playing Declan Ahern with all her little wiles, until sometimes he was driven to the verge of desperation. He was the son of a fisherman and small farmer, like all the poor people in this vicinity, cultivating to-day their little patches of ground fertilised with rotten seaweed, which they watched and seized, as the tide threw it up on the half mile of beach before the village; and to-morrow, out on the high seas, fishing for mackerel or sprats or whiting for their own poor food, or for the market in the neighbouring town. It was a hard, rough life; but they were contented enough. Declan's mother was now very old and feeble; and the time had come when they required a younger housekeeper. There was many a lass in the neighbourhood who would have been glad if Declan's eyes rested favourably upon her; but no! Anstie had captivated him; and Anstie alone should be his wife. She knew this; and probably had determined, sooner or later, to accept him; but she loved her freedom, and the little play of coquetry amused her, especially as she had created untold jealousy in the hearts of the other village girls.

"Were the boats out this afternoon?" she loftily asked Declan, as she walked by his side.

"They were, Anstie," he said; "where were you?"

"Oh! I was engaged," she said. "There is a strange gentleman at the House, and the cook asked me up to help."

"Faith, then, she couldn't do better," said Declan. "Begor, you must have turned out wondherful things in the way of aten'!"

"Well, a little! I'll be surprised if the Dublin gentleman doesn't like his dinner this evening, that's all!"

"An' why didn't ye remain to see it out?" said Declan, half-curiously, half-flatteringly.

"Because I would have you know, that if I wish to help on occasions, I don't want to be taken for a cook!"

"God forbid!" said Declan. Then, fearing that he was treading on dangerous ground, he abruptly changed the conversation.

"Begor, as ye hadn't a bret' of air all the mornin'," said he, "cookin' and slushin', perhaps you would take a turn wid me in 'The Linnet'?"

"No, thanks," she said loftily. "Isn't that Jack Motherway? I must spake to him!"

The crestfallen Declan walked up the sloping cliff with a sore heart, whilst Anstie went forward to meet a young man-of-war's man, who had just got away from his ship on a brief furlough. He was a bright, handsome, young fellow, and, as he walked towards her with the loose easy gait of a sailor, he was a decided contrast to the lumbering young fisherman she had just left. Anstie looked up into his bright handsome face, his firm neck open at the throat, the loose hands swinging at his side, as if ready, at a moment's notice to haul a sail, or ship an oar; and she half decided to cut Declan Ahern for ever. Meanwhile, the latter, high up on the cliff, jealously watched the young couple down on the beach, devouring with hungry eyes the eager face of Anstie, or with maddening envy the fine figure and graceful swinging gait of his rival. After some minutes' conversation he saw the young sailor pushing forward his own boat "The Linnet," and rushing her into the shoaling waters preparatory to launching her out on the deep. He saw him help Anstie into the sternsheets, and then steady the boat in the shallow tide for a moment. Motherway had evidently forgotten, or missed something, for he left Anstie there, and passed up to the village at a swinging trot. With a heart bursting with rage and jealousy,

Declan looked down at Anstie, who was idly toying with the breakers that swept in long sheets around the boat, lightly rocking it, without lifting it from the firm bed of sand. Then, in a wild paroxysm of wrath, he made up his mind. Swiftly, and silently, he descended the grassy side of the cliff, and came behind the boat, unseen by Anstie. With one tremendous push, he flung it forwards; and then, running with it, till up to his waist in the waves, he lightly leaped in, and seized the oars. Then, as the boat swung around to the sweep of the breakers, he stood up, and driving one long oar into the sand, he pulled the boat's head to the breaking sea, and, once righted, he sat down deliberately, and with a few swift strokes pulled out into deep water.

At first, Anstie, taken by surprise, took it as a practical jest, and putting on her grandest air and accent, she peremptorily ordered Declan to pull around, and put her ashore at once. He took no heed of her, but pulled steadily out to sea, as if he were racing for a prize at a regatta. Then, Anstie became frightened, as she watched his white face, his set teeth, and the bloodshot eyes that looked away from her, as if he feared that one glance would unbend his resolution.

"Declan, what are you up to?" she said, nervously clutching the gunwale with both hands, as the boat leaped up the long round waves, and sank into their trough.

"What, in God's name, are you up to, Declan?" she cried. "Sure I was only joking. Pull round, and I promise you, Declan, — I will indeed — Oh! Blessed Mother of God, he's mad! he's mad!"

"Declan, for God's sake, stop! stop! where are you going to, at all?"

"To Hell and the Devil, where you wer drivin' me this long time," he said. They were the only words he spoke.

Then she saw that he *was* mad; and, in her agony, she stood up in the stern of the boat, and looked back to the shore. Motherway was standing helplessly, the rudder and its ropes swinging idly in his hand. He did not

know what to think, until the scream of Anstie came over the waters:—

“Jack! Jack! for the love of God, save me! He’s mad! He’s mad!”

He rushed back to the village, and roused the fishermen and their sons. They were incredulous, and laughed at him.

“Begor! that whipster is playing her game well. Never fear, Jack! she won’t have you till you are a warrant-officer at laste!”

“I tell you,” he said, “he’s out of his mind; and is goin’ to drown the girl.”

“Not a bit of it! Declan is too studdy for that. He’ll give her a big fright, and the divil mind her, for her tricks; and pull her ashore agin!”

“Well,” said Jack, “all right! I wash my hands out of it anyway.”

But, when they leisurely walked down to the beach, now in the darkening eve, and saw the boat a mere speck in the offing, they became thoroughly alarmed. For now, the coppery sky had disappeared, and a great wall of blackness, shot through and through with the grey, thin lines of rain, blocked up the entire horizon. It was the storm-phalanx, suddenly veering round from the west whither it was marching to precipitate itself on the northern shore. Angry gusts of wind swept hither and thither, the storm-videttes; and the great sea became ploughed up before its advancing feet. Far out on the horizon, the white sea-horses were racing and plunging furiously; and already the advance guard of the hurricane had taken, and blotted out from human sight the great Head that stood out in the Atlantic to the left of the little village. It was the twilight of an October evening, and the shadows of the night and of the storm were blending together. Now and again, the anxious eyes on shore caught a view of a speck, only a speck, that was lifted up on the crests of the white breakers, and then disappeared in the sea-valleys between them.

"May God help them, for no man can!" was now the exclamation on shore. "'Twould take a Cunarder to weather that storm."

"What came over Declan, at all, at all? sure, he was the quietest boy in the parish!"

"I often tould him," said his old father, Dave Ahern, "that she'd be the ruination of him. Sure the boy never tasted a dhrop of dhrink, until she put her comedher on him! The Divil was in her handsome face, the young whipster."

"Whin was she at her juty?" asked a woman, who thought of the two souls going to inevitable destruction.

"Divil a much her juty throubled her," was the answer. "She thought more of her looking-glass than her conscience."

But when old James Carroll, now tottering and weak, came down to the beach, and silently took his place amongst the bystanders, the conversation took a more sympathetic turn. He heard briefly all that could be told him; and looked out in silent grief over the sea. High up on the cliff overhead, men with their telescopes were sweeping the great expanse of waters now narrowing under the fury of the storm. From time to time, they telegraphed down their discoveries.

"She's all right yet! He's making for the Head! The coast-guards will see them and put out. There, they're gone! No! there she is again! May God help them! Sure we wouldn't mind, but, think of them goin' before God in such a state! There, she's sunk! No! there she is again!"

Silently old James Carroll refused all the sympathy of his neighbours, that was so freely proffered to the lonely old man. His heart was out on the deep with his child. He never saw her faults. He only saw in her face her mother's image. Then, when no word came down from the watchers on the cliff, he turned to his neighbours sadly, and said:—

"'Twas before her, I suppose! She was always afraid

of the say! She used say, 'It is waiting fur me. It is calling fur me! Father, I'll never be berried in the brown airth, mark me words!' An' she used hide her little curly head under the sheets, when the say used be calling at night."

"Cheer up, James! where there's life, there's hope!"

"No! no! It is her fate. She's gone, and for ever! Ah, wirra! if she was only sleepin' wid her mother over there in the ould Abbey, I wouldn't mind. Or, if she died wid the grace of God about her. But, oh my God! sure 'tis I'm the lonely and sorrowful man this blessed night!"

He turned away in desolation from the beach, and his neighbours followed; for now, the night and the hurricane met; and in great cataracts of rain, and lightning flickering out of the breast of the blackness, and the thunder of the on-rushing hurricane, the great wall of cloud and tempest and fire drew out of the deep, and blotted out beach, and cliff and village, as if for ever!

VIII

ROOMS IN TRINITY

HUGH IRETON and Arthur Ashley sat together in the latter's rooms. It was after eight o'clock. The lamp burned brightly on the table and the fire shone cheerfully in the grate, all the more so, perhaps, for the wind that was howling outside. Hugh, though a medical student, was buried deep in some political treatise, for, alas! he had developed a dangerous taste for the dismal science, and his sympathies were towards those strange, novel theses for the regeneration of mankind which have always had such a fascination for the young and ardent. He was reading aloud a glowing, favourite description of the millennium that was rapidly coming, when under the magic word, "Equality" "every valley should be filled and every hill made low"; and there should be no aristocracy but of those whose personal talents or gifts made them really the best.

"I'm not sure," said Ashley, who had put down a volume of Miss Braddon's, and was reading a love-letter from Maud, received by that evening's post, "that you are acting honourably by your mother, Hugh."

"How is that?" said Ireton, looking up.

"You know how she detests these doctrines, and clings to old conservative principles."

"Well? What then?"

"She doesn't know that you have a bias towards revolution?"

"No-o-o!" said Ireton, in a prolonged intonation. "Some day, perhaps; but I am not bound to reveal my merely intellectual secrets to my mother, any more than my secret sins."

"No! But some day there will be an explosion. By Jove! how that wind howls. It is playing the deuce with the slates of old Trinity."

"What news from Maud?" asked Ireton, but half interested in the reply.

"Not much. She is not illegible certainly; every letter is like a circus-poster's; but I am not sure that old Harvey would pass her orthography."

"No! That's not her strong point. But what does the little minx say?"

"*Multum in parvo*. Lizzie dismissed. Governess coming. Forbidden to play with the Allensons, Cork grocer's children. Condemned to finger the piano two hours *per diem*. Great love to Brer Hugh, etc., etc."

"Poor little woman!" said Hugh, affectionately. "I wonder what her fate will be."

"That is easily determinable," said his friend. "On the day on which you marry the 'Lady of the Lea,' I'll marry Maud. That's all!"

"I wish you would," said Hugh. "I could trust her to you; but —"

"*There's* another crux, you know," said Ashley. "You'll certainly get into another conflict with your mother about that same 'Lady of the Lea.' Why don't you forget her?"

"Forget? Perhaps I could and would, but it is the infernal injustice that is shown her that is cutting her image deeper on my mind. Probably, if she were now a recognised member of *good society* — Oh, Lord! that *good*, when we know — no matter! — probably I would have flung aside her memory long since. I could forget that centre of attraction, which she certainly was, when she came into the Admiral's grounds that day; but I can never forget the pariah, the helpless outcast which she was made by good society before evening, nor her pitiful look, as of a hunted animal, when everybody shunned her."

And Hugh Ireton almost sobbed.

"Yes; of course," replied Ashley, nonchalantly, "that does appeal to one's sympathy; and I'm not sure that I would not have kicked that puppy, Penryth. But, after all, Hugh, my dear fellow, these things occur at every ball and party throughout the world; and if you and I were to take up the cause of every wall-flower at an evening party, we'd have a pretty fair number of duels on hand. Besides —"

"No! no! that is different. It is the accident of choice, the principle of natural selection, and no one has a right to complain — Lord! listen to that howling hurricane, how it lashes the old crescent tonight. I can see Maudie hiding her curls under the counterpane. But you were saying, 'besides' —"

"What was it? Oh, yes! Besides, all these little ordeals are intended to be an education, a training for young *débutantes*, who might otherwise lose their little heads —"

"Just like the fagging at Harrow and Eton?"

"Precisely. It is part of the programme. I admit it is savage and all that; but it fits these young people for the rough-and-tumble of life. Did Arnold or Keate ever object to fagging?"

"I'm not sure. The thing was brutal. Doesn't it all prove, Ashley, my main contention, that a new gospel has to be preached? Listen, isn't that terrific? And there's lightning. I can see by the dim flashes. Think of Glendarragh tonight. How the tempest howls up along the valley of the Oaks, and the waves break on the seawall in the darkness. And that lovely girl with that querulous, wretched invalid —"

"There, we are wandering from the New Gospel. Is that a knock? Come in! No! 'Twas but the wind, or a car rattling o'er the stony street.' 'Tis a knock, by Jove! Come in! Is this the preacher of the New Gospel, I wonder?"

There was some hesitation on the part of the new comer, evidently, for he fumbled with the door-handle,

but did not open the door. Ireton went over and threw the door open, saying heartily:—

“Come in, Albrecht. There’s no one here but Ashley and I.”

The visitor was a decided contrast to the two athletic young fellows who were now his hosts, and there was almost a pitiful and painful difference between his pale features and light form and the more robust physique of his friends. He was tall, but undeveloped in proportion to his height, and he stooped under rounded shoulders which some said were the acquired result of study, and merely a “student’s hump,” but some others thought indicative of a tendency to phthisis. This feature was accentuated by the curious wistful eagerness with which he threw himself forward into anything — book, person, conversation — that interested him. His was a nature never in repose. Shrinking and timid in ordinary life, it needed only the stimulus of thought or action to throw it into an attitude that seemed almost convulsive. And in this state, his features, delicately rounded and refined as a young girl’s, glowed and shone with emotion, as his eyes seemed filled with a light of inspiration, and his small white hand ran like a comb through his thick, tangled hair, or tossed lightly the brown curls that hung deep down over his neck. He was the son of an Austrian colonel, who had married an English wife whom he met at one of the Embassies. The colonel was dead, but the mother was still living quietly on a moderate income in one of the Dublin suburbs, her tie in life, her son; her business and consolation, her religion. She belonged to a very strict sect of Dissenters, whose creed was extreme Calvinism. From this gloomy faith Albrecht (he was never known by any other name, although he had been called Ian at his birth) speedily emancipated himself. He had resided abroad for a time and imbibed larger views of life and its final issues from contact with modern thought. And he had read freely, perhaps too freely, but that his pure, exalted mind had always spontaneously

rejected the dangerous elements with which liberal thinkers had too freely surcharged their theories of progress and advancement. In this unconscious sifting and straining, he retained a great love for whatever was beautiful in Nature and in the Universe, a great love for his species, and the distinct and unique ambition of serving his fellowmen, and doing some little work in the world before he passed out to the Unknown. For he felt that his time was short here below. He little recked of health. Perhaps, if he had economised strength, mental and physical, he might have hoped to live into middle age; but he was a wastrel of health, burning it up in midnight thought, in the dangerous excitement of emotions which, if honourable, were none the less consuming and perilous; and when remonstrated with, he would answer, with Festus:—

“We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most — feels the noblest — acts the best.”

One of those mighty truths which men are at most pains to disavow — at least, in action.

“You must really pardon my intrusion,” he said with that tone of humble deference that characterises such men, “but I could not remain in my room alone under this terrific storm. It quite magnetised me. There must be a good deal of electricity in the air. Have you seen the lightning?”

“Yes,” said Ireton. “You can see the dim flashes now and again on the window-blind.”

“I thought so,” said Albrecht, as if he had made some unpleasant discovery. “I felt it tingling in my shoulders and pricking under my hair. I am horribly susceptible to these atmospheric disturbances. ’Tis a unique and almost phenomenal hurricane.”

As if to verify his words, great gusts of wind slapped the window-panes and shook their half-rotten frames.

One could hear the elements howling away in the far night, and gathering strength as if by the pouring of endless blasts of wind into some common vortex, from which cataract after cataract smote the earth, the gables of houses, the inclined roofs, until the chimneys howled with the tumult, and now and again the crash of a slate in the Quadrangle, or of glass in some student's room, added to the weird horror by telling of the success of destruction.

"There seems to be no thunder," said Albrecht.

"No," said Ireton, "but look here! Lower that lamp, Ashley, and come here, Albrecht!"

The young men approached the window. The night was so intensely dark they could but half discern the windows, washed again and again under the pitiless rain. But now a great flash, swift as thought, lit up the Quadrangle, the rooms at the far side, the trees: then all was blackness again.

"'Tis terrific," said Albrecht. "No man has ever yet described it. What a subject for a word-picture!"

"The storm in 'Lear'?" suggested Ireton.

Albrecht shook his head.

"The midsummer thunder-storm in *Pippa Passes*?" said Ashley.

"Nearer; but not yet!" said Albrecht. "You cannot dissociate the smiling and sunny Italian landscape from that momentary anger. It is the savagery of our storms, their loneliness, their utter and awful desolation that no man can describe. It seems to say — 'There is no hope — none! The final cataclysm has come!'"

There was a long pause, the young men listening to the storm.

"I remember once being caught," he continued, "on the borders of Lake Como. I was strolling along the road in brilliant sunshine, with just now and again a whiff of frozen wind from the Alps above, when, on a sudden, the sky darkened, and I was in the very centre of the play of the storm. The lightning seemed to be weaving

a mantle of fire for me. I used to put out my hand to catch them, as children try to catch sunbeams —”

“Then you weren’t afraid?” said Ashley.

“Not a bit,” he said. “I was only wondering if two, now, like Sebald and Ottimar, were here in the storm, guilty and remorseful, but unrepentant, how would they feel? Think of the Almighty, with his javelins in his hand, searching through the darkness to strike and annihilate the guilty ones.”

“They wouldn’t believe in an Almighty Avenger,” suggested Ireton.

“They would,” said Albrecht, solemnly. “They would hate each other with that selfish hate that fear engenders. For, say what you please, love never extinguishes self.”

“Except in the single-minded and the pure,” said Ashley. “Suppose it were brother and sister, or husband and wife that were caught in that storm, do you mean to say that they would not feel for each other more than for self? You see ’tis ‘perfect love that casteth out fear.’”

“Yes; but where will you find it?” said Albrecht, almost despairingly. “Where is the perfect love that sacrifices the Ego on the altar? I suppose on earth (I am not revealing personal secrets) there never was such affection as between my good mother and me. It seemed to be absolute, and perfect, and conditionless. There was no alloy of self-interest, or gratitude, or speculation of the future about it. Yet, on a mere suspicion, one day my mother says gravely to me, and the calm manner in which she spoke made it all the more emphatic: ‘Ian, but two things can come between us — politics and religion. Should you ever descend to the level of the mob, and become an Anarchist’ — mark the correlation; ‘or should you ever embrace the religion of the kitchen and the scullery, that day we part, and for ever!’”

“It seems to me, if I may say so, Albrecht, rather narrow-minded. Ashley and I have been discussing the question under another aspect.”

"It is the inevitable," said Ashley, with a yawn. "Clearly, if you, young fellows, want to keep whole skins you must give up your Quixotism and embrace facts."

"But when, in God's name, then," said Albrecht, rushing in with the excitement he had only badly concealed, "when shall the reign of charity come on earth? The reign of dogma vanished at the Reformation; the reign of Paul, that is of grace, departed like a ghost in the face of the new materialism; but the reign of love — divine, unselfish love — the gospel of John, that is, of Christ, seems to be as far away as ever. The fissures between class and class seem to be ever deepening and widening. Talk of Hindu caste! there is more caste-worship in Ireland than in any country under the sun!"

"I am with you, Albrecht," said Ireton. "Like yourself, it is not a question of feeling — my feelings are unengaged and unconcerned —"

Ashley whistled slowly at the fire.

"Unengaged and unconcerned," repeated Hugh Ireton. "But every decent feeling revolts at the brutality with which society draws its lines of demarcation; and enforces *tabu* against individuals, not for their own personal inferiority or shortcomings, but for the sins of their parents. Arthur and I lately came across a case of the kind in the South. A young lady, of excellent character, bright, intelligent, quite out of the common in fact, is not that so, Arthur? —"

"Perfectly," said Arthur, studying the fire.

"That young lady," said Hugh, "after becoming, by virtue of her rare attractions, a centre of interest at a certain garden-party, was ruthlessly insulted and neglected, merely because a pack of toothless old tabbies —"

"Hugh! Hugh!" said Arthur Ashley.

"Yes, I repeat it," said Hugh, quite forgetting the part his own mother had played in the ostracism. "I say took it into their heads that there was some family stain, which no one can determine, no one explain — and that

poor young girl was subjected to an hour's misery, because of this miserable suspicion —"

"Were you there?" said Albrecht, fixing his glowing eyes upon him.

"I — I was!" said Hugh, with hesitation.

"What did you do?" interrogated Albrecht.

"Do? What could I do? My mother —"

Then, for the first time, he remembered the part his mother took in that deplorable affair, and he was struck silent. •

Albrecht waited. But Hugh Ireton remained silent. At length the former said:—

"If I had the honour of that young lady's acquaintance I would have gone to her, remained with her, honoured her, and pitched the whole caste of hypocrites to the devil!"

"I'm just thinking that you two young fellows will modify your views considerably when you get out of your teens," said Ashley. "You haven't cut your wisdom teeth yet. Besides, Miss Lucas is not a girl, or a woman, at all. She is one of those things you read of in Greek or German romance, just like the Lady Geraldine in 'Christabel.'"

"Lucas? Miss Lucas, did you say?" asked Albrecht.

"Yes. Miss Miriam Lucas of Glendarragh House, who gave me the shivers, and mesmerised Ireton," said Ashley. "There, we've had enough of her. Let us have some supper."

He went to the door and shouted:— "Cassidy!"

But Cassidy was asleep, or deafened by the storm, and Arthur had to go down a flight of steps to find him.

"I've heard that name somewhere," said Albrecht, as if searching his memory.

Hugh Ireton brightened up.

"Did you?" he demanded, eagerly.

"Ye-es! Where?" said Albrecht, in self-examination.

"My memory does not deceive me, but I cannot just recall time and place."

"I'd give a good deal to find out what that family secret is," said Hugh, anxiously scanning the other's face. "I feel sure there is nothing in it, at least, nothing too disgraceful. And in any case," he said, fiercely, "why visit the sins of parents on the children?"

"Nature does so," said Albrecht, quietly.

"If it does, all the more reason for intelligence, not to say charity, to fight against nature, and conquer its evil tendencies."

"I know I have some dim knowledge of the name," said Albrecht, musingly, "and it will all come back. Miriam — Miriam — Myrrha! Ha! That's better! Myrrha Lucas! I feel it dawning upon me. Never mind. Some day it will all flash out. Then I'll tell you, Ireton."

"You promise me?"

"Yes! Yes! I'll tell you."

It was a simple supper enough — bread and cheese and beer. But young men are content with little. Venison pasties, champagne and gout are the perquisites of middle age. Albrecht declined the invitation to sup with his friends; and went back to his room. They followed the law of nature, and discussed him. They had not yet adopted the law of Society, and they discussed him as brothers and friends.

"'Twill be horrible if he breaks with his mother," said Ireton, forgetting his own proximate danger in the same connection.

"Horrible," said Ashley.

"I think I'd forgive her for the religious prejudice," said Ireton.

"What was that? I forget," said his friend.

"The religion of the kitchen and the scullery," said Ireton.

"The religion of the kitchen and the scullery?" slowly repeated Ashley. "Does she mean the noble cultus of gastronomy?"

"No! but Papistry. Anything but that!"

"And why that?" asked Ashley.

"Because that is such an unspeakable degradation," said Ireton. "It is the sacrifice of all mental and moral freedom."

"But then, it is free choice," said Ashley. "There is no compulsion in our days. If I chose to surrender my mental and moral freedom, am I not justified in doing so?"

"Quite so, but not at such a price!"

"What price?"

"Honour, dignity, manhood, social position —"

"Caste!" said Ashley, with a laugh.

"I think I'll get to bed," said Ireton, "if the hurricane will let me sleep. We have had enough of these academics for one evening."

"To be continued in our next," said Ashley. "It is not often, Hugh, you are caught in the toils."

IX

LOST AND FOUND

WHEN Edwin Lucas and his guest sat down to dinner in the gloomy dining-room at Glendarragh, the storm was at its highest. The one tall lamp shed but a pallid light around the dark, wainscotted room; and though the flame of the wood fire, great blocks of elm and pine, leaped up the chimney and threw a roseate colour on the tablecloth and chairs, it was but a sickly glare, so great was the shadow that seemed to leap from the ceiling, and wrap everything in its gloomy folds. All day long, that eventful Sunday, the two gentlemen had been closeted together in what was called the library — a small poorly-furnished room that opened from the drawingroom, and had probably served as a breakfast parlour in the days when guests were numerous and the laughter of children perhaps, was heard in the hall. Miriam was too proud to intrude unasked on their deliberations, yet she could not help feeling anxious, not about herself, but about her father, when, late in the afternoon, he came out of the library and feebly asked for pen and ink. He looked so worn, so flushed and excited, that Miriam dreaded one of those sudden fits that were sure one day to end in death. She got the pens and ink for her father. As she handed them to him she noticed that he was almost sunk in a stupor, and had apparently forgotten his demand. He woke up in a start.

“There are the pens and ink you required, father,” she said, handing them to him.

“Oh yes! I was near forgetting. What was it? Pens and ink for what? Who? Oh, I remember! Mr. — Mr. —”

"Holthsworth," suggested Miriam.

"Yes, Mr. Holthsworth wished to write a letter. No! that's not it. Wished to — to —"

"Father, whatever it is," said Miriam, "I would wish it were over, and that you wouldn't fatigue yourself."

"Yes! Yes! 'tis all over now. I did my best. But —" He paused, and looked mournfully at his child.

"Miriam, will you forgive me?" he said at length.

"I have nothing to forgive, father," she said; though she felt he was being dragged into some unaccountable wrong.

He turned away in great pity and remorse, and entered the study again.

There was but little conversation at dinner. Holthsworth tried to be very agreeable; made remarks on the storm, told stories, tried to bring back to Miriam's memory little incidents of her childhood. But now and again the moaning of the wind in the deep chimney became almost too solemn, and the terrific gusts that, rushing up the Valley of the Oaks, assumed fresh strength from their concentration within its boundaries, beat at the windows, and shook the frames, and made the old house tremble to its foundations, whilst the rain, not in gusts but in sheets, washed the window panes and ran in cataraacts from the leaky gutter above. Silent and calm, Miriam presided, as course after course was brought in. Holthsworth drank freely. Her father, too, drank more claret than was his wont. The former was trying to cheat himself of ennui. The latter was trying to stifle remorse. Once or twice Miriam, by some little feminine stratagem, prevented her father from filling his glass too frequently. She noticed his excitement, and had a presentiment of disaster.

"If I can only save him this night," she thought, "until that evil man leaves the house, all may be right."

She noticed that the maid who was bringing in the courses looked very white and was trembling as she laid down dish after dish.

"What's the matter, Annie?" she said at length. "You shouldn't be so nervous. The storm will soon spend itself. In any case you are in no danger, and the lightning is harmless. You see, it is the great, broad sheet-lightning."

"Taint that at all, Miss," said Annie, with trembling lips. "Might I say a word to you outside, Miss?"

"To be sure," said Miriam, rising, and with much concern on her features. "Well, Annie, what is it, child? Why are you afraid?"

"Oh, Miss! 'Tis awful! Poor Anstie, Miss, that was here up to an hour ago —"

"What about her? What has happened?" asked Miriam, anxiously.

"She was walking with two boys, Miss, and they had a fight, Miss; and wan o' them took her out in a boat and drowned her, Miss!"

And Annie burst into tears.

"Can this be true?" said Miriam. "Who were the boys?"

"Jack Motherway, Miss," said one of the group that had now gathered into the hall. "He was home from the 'Revenge,' Miss, on furlough. But twasn't him at all, Miss, but Deck Ahern, ould Dave Ahern's son —"

"They said, Miss, that Deck got out of his mind, and threw her out of the boat; and that you'd hear her roarin' and cryin' and bawlin' at the Point."

"This is serious," said Miriam. "Look after the other courses, Annie — but wait! It cannot be long now!"

She returned to the diningroom, and when dinner was over, made some apology, and rapidly donning waterproof and goloshes, went down to the village. She had not gone far, buffeted and beaten hither and thither by the wind, when she was aware of a figure following her rapidly, then as swiftly coming to her side in the darkness. She divined who it was at once; but said, as the squall tore open her mackintosh and swept her words behind her: —

"Who is that? Is that you, Coppal?"

"Me, Miss," said Coppal.

"Give me your hand, then, and direct me."

He put out his rough, grimy hand and grasped her little wet glove.

"You've heard all about Anstie, Coppal?"

It was in a voice of badly-suppressed exultation he replied:

"Anstie? Yes? Drowned? Ha! Ha! Deck Ahern wasn't poor Cop for her."

"I hope you are sorry for the poor girl," said Miriam.

"Am! She call Coppal 'fool'; Deck no fool. She call Coppal 'Onshuck.' Deck no 'onshuck.' 'Will you marry me, Cop?' An' she laugh at poor Cop. 'Will you marry me, Anstie?' She want Jack, big sailor-boy. Deck has her; they are married now!"

Miriam shuddered.

"Can't you say, 'Lord have mercy on her'?" she said.

"Me? Oh, no! She's in hell, hell. She call Cop 'fool,' an' she's in hell."

"Cop, if you say that again I'll send you away."

"Oh, don't, Miss. Oh, don't, for God's sake, don't! Here is the house. Ould James good to Cop!"

The tale she heard from the old man, or rather from the group of women who were gathered in sympathy in the little cottage, was brief, but tragic. Anstie was not drowned; at least, no one could say so; but there was no hope for that fragile boat in the teeth of such a storm. Miriam felt deeply for the old man, now completely bereft in his declining years. She could hardly summon up sympathy for the lost girl. Anstie had been too hard and flippant and insincere to demand much interest in this gentle young lady, whose heart went out to all the poor in her neighbourhood, and who, in turn, was worshipped by the poor. Yet, little things came back, in the vivid recollection which death creates, which proved that Anstie was not altogether heartless — nay, even had

a kind of far-off worship, and even love, although tinged with jealousy, for the young mistress of the Great House.

"Ah, Miss, if you knew how fond Anstie was of you?" said the old man. "She worshipped the ground you walked on."

"That's thrue for you, thin," subjoined a neighbour. "Sure she used to set the other girls wild by tellin' them all the fine things Miss Miriam would give her."

"And sure, she used to brag that she, alone, was asked up to the Great House. 'Twas only today she was braggin' and boastin' of all she done in the kitchen. May the Lord ha' mercy on her sowl, poor girl! Sure she's the loss! The ould must go, but the young might stay!"

"Had Deck Ahern and Anstie any previous quarrel?" asked Miriam, with some half-meaning, dimly revealed to herself.

"Wisha, they used be out and in, in and out, a hunder' times a day. He was crass, an' she was aggerawatin'; but they used make it up again. They had one big fight a few weeks ago. It appear she tould Deck a parcel of lies, up at the chapel, about two young gintlemin that rode over here wan day from Queenstown. She made him believe 'twas after herself they were comin' whin they never saw or heard of the place before. Deck found out 'twas all a parcel of lies; and they didn't spake for days. But they made it up agin."

Miriam passed out of the cottage with a strange sense of lightness; and went down to Dave Ahern's, still guided by Coppal. Here she heard nothing but angry comments, and bitter sayings about the wretched girl. There was no pity for her here. Miriam did not remain long. She said to Coppal, as they returned home, on the lee side of the hill behind the valley:—

"No pity for poor Anstie there! Why did ye all hate her, Cop?"

"Wha?" said Cop, choked by the wind.

"Poor Anstie! No one has a good word for her. All the pity is for Deck."

"Deck? Poor Deck! He hit me wance. She made him. But the divil was looking for her a long time; an' he has her."

"Shame! Shame, Coppal! You mustn't guide me again."

She entered the house hastily, glad to be safe from the storm. Her mackintosh glistened and streamed with rain, her boots were sodden, her dress draggled and wet. The struggle with the fierce elements outside had given a momentary blush to her usually pallid features, and tossed and disarranged her hair. She was passing through the hall on the way to her room when she met the housemaid, Annie.

"Are the gentlemen here still, Annie?" she said.

Annie said, "yes," but in a tone that seemed to imply much more. Miriam stopped. Just then she heard a voice through the half-opened door. It was Holthsworth's:—

"One more, old fel'; let us drink to the 'Beauty of Glendarragh.' Hip, hip —"

He had not finished, when Miriam strode into the room. She walked up to the fireplace, where Holthsworth and her father were standing. The former, with flushed and stupid eyes, held a wineglass firmly between his fingers. The latter, stooped under the maudlin influences of the wine, held a half-filled glass before him. His trembling hands had spilled the red wine on his fingers and coat, as he strove with difficulty to balance himself. It was a pitiable and humiliating exhibition. It roused all the passion and pity of Miriam. She advanced slowly, keeping her eyes, blazing with contempt and indignation, steadily fixed on Holthsworth. He tried to brazen it out, but failed. His eyes fell beneath the indignant and contemptuous glance of that young girl. She locked her arm in her father's; gently removed the wineglass from his fingers; and with a parting look at her guest, passed from the room.

Holthsworth, stupefied by the wine and the rebuke,

stood gazing at the fire for a long time. Then flinging himself into his chair, he drew over the decanter of port, filled a glass, tossed it off, and said: —

“Pah! the melodramatic antics of a spoiled chit of a girl! Why should I heed? I have got all that I required — her own dainty figure into the bargain. Come, old Omar, my genuine and only-inspired prophet, what dost thou say?” —

“Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling;
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter — and the Bird is on the Wing.”

“And there’s another little bird also on the wing, good Omar! There is!”

Meanwhile Miriam had conducted the tottering figure of her father across the hall to the drawingroom, and seated him in an armchair.

“There, try and sleep,” she said, gently, arranging a pillow for his head. “It always serves you. When you awake, we shall have some tea.”

She was leaving the room to go upstairs when he called her back.

She bent down over him.

“Miriam, my child, can you ever forgive me for this, and all other evil I have done thee?”

She stooped lower and kissed his forehead, saying nothing. She then went to her room. In her excitement, she forgot all about her wet dress and shoes, and sat down near a little table, leaning her head heavily on her hand. It had been an eventful day. The long hours of conference in the study between this evil man and her father; the horrible tragedy of Anstie Carroll and Declan Ahern; the swift little drama in the diningroom, which she guessed might be fraught with all kinds of consequences to herself and her father — all combined to throw memory backward on each detail, exaggerating it; and to throw imagination forward to gauge the possibilities that might lie enwombed in the misty and mysterious future.

There was a timid knock at the door. Annie entered. Miriam thought she had come to announce tea.

"Where's the master, Miss?" said Annie.

"He's in the drawingroom. Don't disturb him. He likes to sleep till tea-time."

"He's not in the drawingroom, Miss!" said Annie, half reluctantly.

"Then he's gone to his bedroom," said Miriam impatiently, as if some new disaster was foreboded.

"No one heard him, Miss; but William heard the hall door open and shut about half an hour ago. We thought 'twas that — that — that — gentleman!"

"Perhaps! — May God now help me!" said Miriam, in an agony of apprehension and fear. "This is awful!"

Her father's last words, his pitiful appeal for forgiveness, his attitude of despair, as if he had consummated some heinous crime, and sought the absolution of death, flashed back upon her.

"God and His Blessed Mother will help you, Miss," said the faithful girl. "You deserve it from them."

They searched every room in the house, in vain. Then the servants examined the diningroom. Holthsworth was sleeping calmly, under the influence of the Flagon and Philosophy. Then, there was but one conclusion.

In the swiftness of her agony, Miriam gave rapid orders to the servants, and taking a stable-lantern from the hands of the groom, she bade him follow with another, and with ropes. Then, without reflecting whither she was going, she bade one of the girls to unfasten the front door. It was flung back and the girl tossed against the wall by the violence of the storm. Then, Miriam leaped out into the night. In an instant the lantern was whisked from her hand, and extinguished; and she was spun round and round the gravelled terrace until she got under shelter of some tall pines that fringed it on the southern side. Here she paused for breath. Then, recovering herself, she sped down to the village, keeping under the shelter of the high hedges, and valorously bending against the tem-

pest when it struck her. It appeared to have increased in volume and intensity since she came down by the same pathway an hour ago. At last she came within the lights of the village. It was close upon ten o'clock and the lights were few. Most of the villagers were in bed. But, in a few minutes, her sad tale was on every lip; lights flashed in every house; and a band of eager volunteers was enlisted to search the cliffs on either side the beach.

"If he's gone on yon cliff, Miss," said an old fisherman, "he's not gone far! Ten paces in such a gale, and he was over!"

"You stay here, Miss, and warrum yourself be the fire; and let the min go on search. Sure, the poor, old gentleman isn't gone far."

That would not do, however. Miriam could not rest there when her beloved was out in the stress of the storm. She should go.

"But what good?"

There is no use in questioning. She must join in the fray with the elements, and be the first to rescue her father, if yet he may be saved.

They set out on that apparently hopeless quest. With great difficulty, and only by the assistance of some strong-armed fishermen, did she climb the cliff, and there, confronting the storm, which broke on its summit with tremendous force, she was suddenly swept backward into the fields, and had to run before the gale to save herself. Then, beating up against the storm, she regained the summit and saw beneath the white fringe of foam, which was the only thing discernible in the thick darkness, that was howling as if with the screams of countless lost spirits. On she sped, throwing all her fragile weight against the wind, and ever and again wiping the lashing rain from her face and eyes, that she might see straight before her to where the lanterns shook to and fro in the hands of the fishermen. Now and again they would stop to look down to a ledge of cliff beneath, and Miriam's heart would stop beating, as she dreaded, at every

pause, some fearful discovery. Her dress, sodden before by the rain, now clung close to her figure, her shoes flung out water at every step on the saturated turf. She could but faintly hear the shouts of the men in the distance, as they called to each other, so terrific was the force of the gale, and so loud and angry the hoarse wash of the lashed waves beneath. Sometimes one of the fishermen would return to her side and say, with a familiarity that seemed irreverent to himself, —

“How are ye gettin’ on, Miss? Sure we must find something’ soon!”

But not a man of them would venture to offer her his hand, or touch her, so far away she seemed to their humble imaginations. Probably, if any rough hand did grasp her tiny hand, now ungloved, it would not be quite safe for him nor her. That night was no time, and that cliff no place for the nervous dread of chivalry. It needed a senseless, nerveless thing to offer and give her the required assistance.

“If I could only pray,” she said. “If I could call on the Unseen, like these poor people, it would be a help. What is it they say: Jesus, Mary!”

Just then she heard the soft tread behind her as of a beast — the soft tread of naked feet pattering and splashing on the wet turf. She heard also the panting of some wild animal in the darkness, and in a moment, a cold, wet, fishy hand grasped hers, and pulled her violently aside.

“Keep back, Miss! Keep back!” said the voice.

“Oh, Coppal!” said Miriam, recovering from her fright, “what a shock you gave me! But where were you all the night? I was looking for you!”

“In bed, in bed. Woke up. Dog barking. Lanterns. What? What? What? What? Gov’nur over the cliff! Keep back, Miss! Keep back! Don’t you see the hole?”

No! the acute senses of the poor imbecile perceived in the darkness what the keener eyes of the young girl could

not see. She suffered herself to be led passively and helplessly by the idiot.

They had gone, on their hopeless quest, something more than a quarter of a mile when the fishermen turned back, and coming up with Miriam said: —

“We are sorry, Miss Miriam, but there’s no use going further tonight. We can see nothing. We’ll be out the first thing in the morning, and, with God’s blessing, we’ll find your father.”

“But — but —” she stammered, “what may occur till then?”

“The min are gone round to the Head, Miss,” they said, with great pity in their hearts, “and will be comin’ back this way, an’ if anything has happened —”

“Then I shall go to meet them,” said Miriam. “You all get home as soon as you can. You may be of help in the morning.”

They left her there, in the storm and the darkness — left her reluctantly and shame-heartedly. Yet, they knew it was a bootless quest.

“At laste, take the lantern,” one said, shoving it into the hands of the idiot.

“I wo-not,” said Coppal. “I can see better with the eyes that God give me.”

They cut their way through the darkness and the storm — that fair young girl, her face flushed under the fierce rain that washed it mercilessly, and her beautiful fair hair now tossed and dishevelled, and torn under the fierce sifting of the wind; and her guide and companion, a poor, witless thing, a proverb in many mouths and a butt of all men’s scorn. Yet, on that lone and desolate cliff, some strange instinct, planted by the Eternal Mind in lieu of reason, guided the muttering, stammering idiot through the darkness, showed him the rough chasms under his feet, the deep cavernous indentations in the face of the cliff, where one false step would be instant death for both; and Miriam, the beautiful, the desired, trusted herself implicitly to his guidance, and believed

that if her quest was not to be altogether vain, Coppal, and he alone, could make it successful. They had gone about half a mile, and Miriam was almost exhausted, when Coppal suddenly stopped, and leaned down his ear as if to hear better. They were now quite close to the Head, but there was no sign of the rescuing party, who had gone out to search for Declan and Anstie. For a few seconds the idiot remained bent in a listening attitude. Miriam could see in the darkness a little bay, for the waves were fretted into white foam by the huge rocks that here and there filled the chasm beneath her. Then Coppal, releasing her hand, stooped down, and stretching himself at full length on the wet turf, leaned out over the cliff and tried to peer into the darkness. Then straightening himself up, he grasped Miriam's hand once more, and cried:—

“Dere's somethin' dere, Miss. Come!”

Notwithstanding her sense of great danger, she suffered herself to be led by the idiot, step by step, down the rough goat-path that led to the little bay. Several times she stumbled on the gravel, and Coppal cried:—

“Keep in, keep in, Miss! Lane agin the cliff.”

She did so, throwing all her weight against the wet, red rocks, and grasping at tiny brambles and sea-shrubs to help her perilous descent. At last, they stumbled out upon the firm, wet sand. Cautiously guiding his young mistress, Coppal groped along from rock to rock, peering here and there, as if his eyes could pierce the darkness. At last they came close to where the foaming broken water washed around their feet, the spent and feeble sputter of waves that had flung their gigantic strength upon the strand, and were now retreating, angrily dragging the reluctant pebbles with them. Miriam drew back, but Coppal, rushing forward, stooped down and pulled something heavy and dead from the grip of the jealous waves. When he had hoisted it high above the reach of the breakers, he bent down and felt it all over with his wet hand. Then, rising up, he

gave vent to a long, low, dismal howl, as of a beast cheated of his prey; and Miriam shivered in the rain and the darkness, for she believed that he had found what he sought, and that she, herself, was alone in the world.

X

GUARDIAN AND WARD

JUST as the cry of Coppal echoed through the darkness, rising high above the storm, lights were seen dimly flashing on the headland above — the lights of the rescuing party which had gone out to seek Anstie and Declan. Hoarse voices echoed down through the black night, and in response to Coppal's cries, the lights were seen here and there as the bearers descended the cliff cautiously. In a few minutes the fishermen were on the sandy beach; but when they flashed their lanterns here and there, and the light fell upon Miriam, they started back in fear and amazement, and would have retreated if she had not detained them. Her tall figure, with her garments clinging close from the rain; her face, swept by her wet and sodden hair, the waterproof hood, forming a cowl for her head — all appeared to the astonished gaze of the rescuers, seen there in the darkness of midnight and in the face of the howling hurricane, like a vision of some spirit that had been borne in by the storm, and had floated on the billows to the land. They did not recognise her till she spoke, and calmed their superstitious fears.

"Good God, Miss!" said the captain of the party, "we thought how you wor a ghost. What is it? Was it you that shouted at us on the cliff?"

"No," she said. "Come hither and help."

They went over to where Coppal bent over the sea-waif; and flashing their lanterns downwards, they recognised the apparently dead body of Anstie Carroll. It was cold and rigid, and the dress clung heavily around it. There was a slight froth on the mouth that seemed to indicate death. Miriam, dreading the revelation,

came over hesitatingly; but felt a strange sensation of relief at seeing the body of the girl.

"Would you mind, Miss Miriam," said one of the men, who had torn open Anstie's dress, "puttin' your hand on her heart to see if 'tis batin'?"

Miriam knelt down and placed her hand on the girl's heart. It seemed as if there were a slight pulsation. She doubted her judgment.

"Move her gently aside," she said.

They did; and now she discovered, slow and thin, the vibrating of the heart.

"Did ye bring cordials?" said Miriam.

Only a tiny flask of whiskey. Miriam poured some on the purple lips of the girl, and moistening her hands with the liquid, she chafed the cold face, and in a few moments had the pleasure of seeing the eyes faintly open and look unconsciously at her.

"It is exhaustion rather than drowning," she said to the wondering men. Then, by degrees, she managed to get a few drops into the girl's mouth. There was a quick reviviscence, and Anstie, raised by the strong hands of the men, stared blankly around her.

Meanwhile Coppal, prowling around like a wild beast, found the boat in which the lovers had gone out to their tragic fate, stove in, and gradually going to wreck under the force of the breakers; and a little further on, seated on a rock, with his head sunk down between his legs, in an attitude of utter prostration and collapse, was Declan Ahern. He, too, was speedily revived by the kind efforts of the villagers, and then the fishermen stared at Miriam, as if awaiting her orders. She looked at them, with a blank appeal in her eyes, as if she expected them to say something.

"You saw nothing, nothing further on the cliff?" she queried at last.

They looked at her questioningly.

"You didn't meet father?" she asked, falteringly.

"No, Miss! What has happened?"

She told them all. They sympathised deeply with her, but looked at one another. The curse had fallen.

"'Tis a bad business, Miss," they said at length. "We'll get these poor crachures home. It will then be near daylight, and we can go out again."

It was reasonable, and Miriam assented. It was quite easy to get Anstie up the cliff. She was stupid and dazed, but obedient. But Declan resisted furiously. He declared he was dead! dead! and in hell for ever. The poor fellow's mind was hopelessly gone; and the morning had far dawned before they were able to carry him, a violent and dangerous lunatic, into his father's home.

When Miriam returned home, Annie had some tea ready for her. This she hastily drank, and leaving orders that she was not to be disturbed, she went to her room. There, having hastily changed her wet garments, she turned down the lamp, and leaning on a little table, began to think. It had been an eventful day — a day of destiny. It would seem as if fate, having left her in peace for so many years, and now tiring of its indifference, had determined to concentrate in one day the events of many years, so full, so sudden, so final were the catastrophes she had witnessed, or in which she had participated. She knew that some serious business, connected with her own future, had occupied her father and the notary all that long Sunday afternoon; she also knew, as if by instinct, that her father was gone from her for ever. She could hardly find a coign or resting-place for hope in that blank, dim wall of destiny that had risen around her; and if for a moment she leaned a little on probabilities, and the argument that Anstie and Declan had been providentially rescued from the awful death they had tempted, the Curse of Glendarragh, that had haunted the house with its ghastly traditions for so many years, rose up to her memory and her lips, and she concluded that her father's was the latest instance of the dread Nemesis that pursues crime from generation to generation. The thought of her utter loneliness over-

whelmed her with despair. But this was only for a moment. Her strong nature rose up defiantly against any apprehensions which cold reason might create about her future; and her thoughts, summoned from the problem of her own future by her strong will, reverted to the past, and lingered, with more of bewilderment than tenderness, on those from whom she was separated for ever. And, strange to say, in this supreme moment of her life, her feelings would go back, not so much to the memory of her father, whom she had known, as to that of her mother, vague and shadowy as it was, and wrapped more and more in the mists of obscurity. She had loved her father; but it was the love of compassion, which is not the highest leap of that virtue. She had nursed him as a sick child; had borne with all his querulous humours; had been infinitely patient with his eccentricities; but there was lacking that exalted reverence that ennobles and consecrates love. Strength, as much as sorrow, is demanded in a sufferer, if he would command the highest affection. The minor note of contempt jars and disturbs all the finer harmonies that swell and break across the strings of that mysterious lyre, the human heart. Hence, in her desolation, Miriam's thoughts went back to her mother — her sinning, despairing, outcast, wronged mother, who, by some strange instinct, she felt had gone down in the battle of life, not so much by fault of her own, or fate, but by some secret treachery that had never been made known. If only, now, she could see or touch her, nay, even in her most sordid wretchedness; if she could pull her out of the gutters of cities, and clothe her anew with the garments of righteousness; if she could live with her, watch her, cherish her; speak to her soul to soul, as she never could speak to her feeble and complaining father; life would yet have a glorious object, and her future a consecrated ideal to follow and realise. Once, and once only, had she caught a glimpse of a small portrait of her mother. It was a dainty little miniature on porcelain. She saw it for a moment; and then it was

shut from her view for ever. Yet that glance revealed a beautiful, oval face, dark lustrous eyes, and a wealth of fair ringlets framing the face, and revealing it. There was just a suspicion of sternness, or stubbornness, in the under lip, sucked in beneath the upper, where there appeared to hover a faint smile of contempt for men, for the world, for everything. Evidently, a self-centred, self-reliant, defiant face, as of one who would say, going down in the gulfs of despair—"Beaten, baffled, but unconquered!" And the lonely girl, looking into the dismal future, cried in her heart, "I have no fear; but mother, mother, could we but meet, and hand in hand walk boldly through life, defying fate and the world, we might make our own Paradise of earth, not so much shielding each other from hate and scorn, as content to dwell in a mutual love that would exclude fear by defying all opinions and sentiments but our own." And the sweet face in the miniature came back to her in a dream, and hovered over her, until she sank into a peaceful slumber, that was broken only by the grey dawn that shuddered over earth and sea.

It was a grey, raw landscape that met her eyes, as shivering with cold and depression she stood at her window, and looked out over the Valley of the Oaks across the roofs of the village to where, furrowed into great, green billows crested with white flame, the ocean still heaved and trembled after the lashings of the hurricane. There was no sun to light the desolation; only the grey light of early winter; and it showed only chillness and silence. For all Nature seemed awed and subdued after the tumultuous desolation of the previous night. Her thoughts, chilled by the bareness and gloom outside, reverted to herself. Then she thought of Holthsworth, with a shudder of infinite repugnance, and all her energies were awakened to seek means to avoid meeting him, until he had passed from Glendarragh, and, as she hoped, away from her sight for ever. Like all strong spirits, she sought silence in her sorrow; and anything like explanations as

to her father's fate to this man, or hypocritical condolences from his lips would have been unbearable. She swiftly decided what she would do. Without even speaking to the servants, or acquainting them with her determination, she stole through the back garden, and, making a swift detour around the village, and across some meadowland, she found herself at the vicarage. The vicar and his wife were at breakfast. They had been discussing the events of the previous day, with the very contradictory and imperfect information they had gleaned from the villagers; and Mrs. Crosthwaite had her bonnet and shawl ready to run down to Glendarragh, when the faint knock at the door, the exclamation of the maid: "Oh, Miss Miriam!" and a stifled sob told the name of the morning visitor. She rushed out with an exclamation:—"Miriam, my child!" and Miriam could only say:—"Oh, Mrs. Crosthwaite!" as she sank exhausted by fatigue and sorrow into the open arms of her friend.

When Holthsworth awoke, cold and stiff, towards the early hours of the morning, he felt a strange shudder, not of chilliness, but of dread. He shook himself together, and began to reason.

"It is the uncanny place," he said. "Was there ever such a tumble-down, ramshackle, haunted old caravan-serai in the world before? There are ghosts everywhere around, but," as he looked at the empty decanter and the flickering lamp, "I did my best to banish them. Rare good invalid port, too. I wonder what quantity has Lucas got of that precious liquor? The old knave never showed me his cellars. Lord! what a place to live in! not a flower, nor a mirror, nor even a picture—Hallo! what's this distinguished piece of bric-a-brac?"

His eye for the first time caught the weird, strange sculptures near the mantel-piece, and stretching from side to side towards the wall, and he approached to examine and read. As he did, his face fell. He was a strong man, not by any means prone to superstition; but whether he was unnerved by too much wine, or by the solemn

silence that held all things around him, or the strange uncanny place, or the unusual hour, as he read he grew pale and trembled. He then remembered having heard something about this tradition before; but he had dismissed it as childish, and unworthy of a moment's thought. Now, it all came back; and with it, all that occurred the day before, there in the secret recesses of that study. Once again he read it, and tried to shake off the incantation. But he felt that strange shivering again, as of a ghostly hand laid on his face.

"Some one is walking over my grave," he laughed, "as the folks say down here. I shall arise," he continued, with singular flippancy, which his very nervousness intensified, "and go — to bed."

Daylight brought stronger nerves; and an excellent breakfast, to which, notwithstanding the night's debauch, he did full justice, toned him sufficiently to ask questions of the servants about his host, and his own contemplated departure from Glendarragh. He was not surprised when he found himself breakfasting alone. He concluded that his host had not yet risen, and that Miriam had breakfasted early and gone out. He deferred foolish questionings, and possibly unpleasant replies, until he had fortified himself against all possible contingencies in that strange archaic place. But he was hardly prepared by breakfast or philosophy to be told that his host was probably drowned, and that Miriam had fled, no one knew whither.

"Nonsense!" he said to the weeping Annie. "Mr. Lucas has gone down to some farmer's house and is asleep there. He could never have faced that hurricane last night!"

Annie shook her head.

"The whole parish is up and looking for him," she said, weeping. "If he was hiding anywhere he could easily be found."

"But, it is ridiculous, my dear girl — that was an excellent breakfast — you must come to Dublin — you

are thrown away here — it is simply ridiculous to suppose that that feeble old man could have gone even a hundred yards in such a gale!"

"I don't know, Sir," said Annie, "but they say 'tis the Curse!"

"Curse? What curse?"

"The 'Curse of Glendarragh,'" said Annie, removing the breakfast things, but never looking at her visitor. "The curse that will follow the owner of Glendarragh from generation to generation."

"Ha! did you say the 'owner'?" he cried. "Is it the owner, or the occupier, or the trustee? Come now, you're a clever girl! Answer that!"

He was decidedly superstitious, and he hated himself for the weakness.

"I'm sure I don't know, Sir," said Annie. "It's all there on the wall. I'm only saying what the people do be saying!"

"Quite right! quite right! You're an excellent girl. You really must come to Dublin," said Holthsworth, in a kind of reverie of apprehension, rising and going over to the mantelpiece.

He studied the figures long and carefully; read the ghastly interpretation beneath the one, and the hopeful presaging of the other, and snapped his fingers at both.

"Destiny! Nemesis! Humbug! We make our own destinies, and learn to flout the pale, persistent goddess. She pursues cowards, but shrinks from those who turn their faces defiantly towards her. Where's Miss Miriam?" he said angrily, to the servant.

She was frightened by his sudden change of manner, and said: —

"I don't know, Sir. She went out —"

"Had she breakfast?"

"N-no! Sir," stammered the girl.

"At what hour is the carriage ordered?"

"At eleven, Sir."

"I must see your young mistress," he said, angrily.

"Your master will turn up in the afternoon. But I must see Miss Miriam before I go. Where is she?"

"I cannot tell you, Sir," said Annie.

"But you can form an idea! You can guess?"

"The only place she could go, Sir," said Annie, "is down to the village. There is a search party out all the morning. Or over to the parson's."

"Parson? Parson what?" he cried, abruptly.

"Parson Crosthwaite, Sir," she said.

"And what would take her there?" he asked, sharply.

"They're great friends, Sir," said Annie, hastily bundling up the table-cloth, crumbs and all, and fleeing from the room.

"Catch me goin' to Dublin with the likes of you!" she said to herself. And to her fellow-servants:—

"If he isn't the ould boy, he's his nephew. Tell John, for the love of God to get the carriage ready, an' take him away, body and bones, from us."

John was not loth to take the order, and the result was, that a carriage drove up to the door of the vicarage a few minutes after eleven o'clock on that morning, a gentleman alighted, and demanded peremptorily to see Miss Lucas. It was Mrs. Crosthwaite that came into the hall and said:—

"I do not know who you are. I cannot conceive a gentleman intruding on Miss Lucas's privacy on such a morning, and in face of such awful bereavement."

"I should have explained," said Holthsworth, politely, "I am a friend of Miss Lucas's, and a guest at Glendarragh. I simply came on my way back to Dublin to offer my condolences to Miss Lucas on her possible bereavement. I cannot believe that the evil news is correct."

"Miss Lucas is quite prostrated. I shall deliver your message to her —"

"Why should I be prevented from seeing Miss Lucas herself? If the sad news is true, I am now *in loco parentis*. I am her guardian and trustee."

"If you insist, of course. Please step into the drawing-room, and I shall summon Miss Lucas."

It was probably the worst ordeal that Miriam, in such unhappy circumstances, could be called upon to face. She disliked Holthsworth, through that instinctive feeling which fine natures experience when brought face to face with what is warped, and crooked, and insincere. To stand face to face with such a character, to know that it understands perfectly that you read its insincerity and despise it, to feel that you are despised in turn for the weakness of honour, and the powerlessness of truth, which in every age and race have gone under in the unequal conflict — all this was as sharp a trial as a sensitive and refined nature could be called upon to face by the dread exigencies of fate. And Miriam, this morning, physically exhausted and mentally overwhelmed by the magnitude of the disaster that had overtaken her, felt herself quite unable to sustain her attitude of independence and pride. She felt the utter sorrow and despair of that word 'Alone'; and felt she must bow to fate, and see it calmly do its worst.

"You must really pardon my intrusion, Miriam," said Holthsworth, who was almost touched by the pitiful sight of the girl, "but I am sure I hope that all this sad foreboding is unfounded; and that your father is yet safe."

"I can hardly hope it," said Miriam, not looking at him, but gazing vacantly through the window, her hands clasped pitifully before her.

"I was anxious to remain, and help in the quest after your father," he continued; "but business summons me to Dublin."

Miriam was silent. She wished from her heart that he would go and say no more.

"When father returns, I dare say I shall be apprised of it. If — if the worst has happened, perhaps — perhaps —"

"If it concerns you in any way, I shall let you know," said Miriam, interrogatively.

"Well, in one it does," answered Holthsworth, interpreting her question. "In the event of your father's death, which I hoped would be a far-off event, I have the honour to become your guardian, and the trustee of the estate."

He expected a gesture of surprise and even of displeasure; but Miriam showed neither, but continued looking listlessly through the window. He was unwilling to continue without some expression of feeling on her part; but her silence compelled him.

"In such an event, of course, you could not remain here —"

Miriam started now.

"Why?" she said, looking him steadily in the face.

"This is no place for a young lady of your — your attractions," he continued. "You must come to Dublin, and take your proper place in society."

The very word aroused the slumbering spirit.

"Society! I hate the very name. What is your society to me? To go amongst people that hate and despise one another, and would be allies to concentrate their hate and scorn on me; to be brought face to face with all the fraud and insincerity of life, powerless to unmask it and unwilling to adopt it; to have to eat out my heart in the solitudes and deserts of fine company — no! I shall live here and die here, please God, amongst the poor who love me, and to whom I give my love in return."

He saw it was useless to speak further now; and he stretched out his hand in a good-bye. She barely touched it with her fingers. He was going out to his carriage, the one thought uppermost in his mind:—"The very mien, gestures, language and look of her mother! Will she share the same fate?"—when he heard his name suddenly called:

"Mr. Holthsworth, I have lost my father. Where is my mother? you know!"

"I don't know," he said. "But if I could distrust reason, I should say she was speaking with me at this moment."

XI

FAREWELLS

FOR several days the fishermen of the little village continued their quest along the cliff and coast, but rather to satisfy the wish of Miriam, who clung with a kind of passionate tenacity, born of despair, to the hope that in some way her father had escaped the perils of the hurricane, and was safely housed in some poor cabin, or rescued in some mysterious and miraculous manner. For, now the whole sense of her desolation broke in upon her with appalling vividness; and not even the tender care and sympathy of her kind friends at the Vicarage, nor the shy but sincere condolence of her servants and the villagers could mitigate a feeling of loneliness that was overwhelming in its intensity. Sometimes, she reproached herself with her cowardice in yielding so completely to this harrowing sense of her bereavement; and, with swift, strong stirrings of the spirit she would rise above the weakness for days. Then again the word, Alone! which has such depressing suggestions for the strongest and best-balanced mind, would recur to her with terrible significance. She rarely spoke of her sorrow. Souls like hers, prefer to suffer in silence. But, now and again, she would break forth in the presence of her dear friends, who would allow her to sob herself into silence rather than offer empty words of sympathy or weak words against despair; and sometimes, when in the cabin of a fisherman, the quick and ready feelings of the poor would express themselves in rude, but fervent words of condolence, she would only sigh and shake her head sadly.

“Wisha, agragal,” some poor woman would say, “’tis the hard thrial, to be sure, but sure haven’t you God and His Blessed Mother with you?”

"Yes, to be sure," Miriam would answer, "but in the worst trials, people have some friends: but I am alone, alone!"

"How can you be alone, Miss," would come the ready reply, "when you have the great God wid you? Isn't he a match for the wurruld?"

But Miriam had never been taught the philosophy of the poor; and she failed to understand it.

She found a relief, however, in her usual missions of charity and kindness amongst such, as like herself, were suffering; and she was particularly kind to poor little Anstie, who had now fully recovered from the shock of that dreadful evening, but was shunned, as a kind of criminal, by all her associates in the village. Declan Ahern had been taken to the County Asylum, and had been pronounced in a fair way to recovery. His splendid constitution was asserting itself against the effects of the violent paroxysms to which he had unhappily yielded, and which terminated so tragically. But all the blame was laid at Anstie's door, and many and bitter were the comments passed on her conduct. She was formally expelled from the village choir. The young men passed her by without a nod of recognition. The young girls talked loudly at her, when passing, although they affected not to see her. Her father was growing older and more feeble every day, and altogether she who had been the envied one of the village, gradually grew to be the despised. If she had been of a milder nature, this would have had a chastening influence on her; but Anstie had all the fire and passion of her race, and she grew hardened under the pressure of public opinion, and defied it. And just at this crisis, when the affectionate solicitude of friends saved Miriam from despair, her own kindness towards Anstie saved the latter from an utter abandonment of passion.

Meanwhile, Holthsworth, now legal trustee of the estate and of Miriam herself, continued to urge her to leave Glendarragh, and come up to Dublin. But her

dread of society, of mixing with and meeting people who might despise her for her mother's faults, or her own disinclination to accommodate herself to their ways of life, forbade her to accept the invitation. It was the subject of many a friendly debate at the Rectory. The rector was as emphatic as he could be about anything, in saying that Miriam was thrown away there in that remote country place; that she would be an ornament to society, etc. Mrs. Crosthwaite, probably from her affection for Miriam, and her secret, unavowed wish to retain so charming a companion, argued otherwise. Miriam could be happier there amongst those who loved her, than in the cold, steely, if glittering mazes of society. Some day, the Prince would discover her, and marry her; and she would lift the Curse from Glendarragh, and all would go merry as the marriage bell. Then the vicar, a great believer not only in the omnipotence, but in the righteousness, of human law, would prophesy that, sooner or later, her guardian would insist on Miriam's going to Dublin, and that he could not be possibly resisted. Mrs. Crosthwaite, on the contrary, maintained that there was no law to that effect, limiting the freedom of a subject who had come of age; and that even if Holthsworth had recourse to rough measures, there were a hundred ways, thank God, in Ireland, of evading the law, and maintaining individual independence.

"Don't say that, my dear, before the servants," pleaded the gentle rector. "If these ideas went abroad, as sanctioned by me, and — you, the congregation would leave us, and go elsewhere."

"Not much of a loss, and not much of an increase," said Mrs. Crosthwaite. "How many have we? Ten, including Miriam, and two coast-guards and their families. That's another reason for keeping Miriam. If she goes, no one will understand your sermons."

"We would miss her sadly," said the rector, remembering with harmless vanity the pleasant little discussions he had had, from time to time, with the bright, intelligent

girl, about life and death, and the Unseen; and how he had excited her fancy with suggestions of beautiful abstractions, and mysterious hints about the wonder and mystery of life, and the sadness of the eternal progress of things, instead of their settling and subsiding into one happy, uneventful, and irresponsible *Now!*

"There is the great despair of life, my dear," he used to say, "that we cannot stand still. It is always on, on, on — the eternal wheel revolving, night and day, and tossing up sparks of light and fire; and anon, mud and silt and stones. No wonder the poet cried:—

O World, where all things change, and nought abides!
O Life, the long mutation!"

"Aye, Mr. Crosthwaite," Miriam would answer, "but what of the sick, the unhappy, the despairing? Would you wish for an eternal *Now!* for them?"

"N-no," the good rector would answer. "I would give them relief; and, when relieved, establish them in their new-found happiness with an everlasting *Now!*"

"And they would grow weary of it; and pine even for the novelty of pain. Anything, anything, but sameness! Isn't this *ennui* the disease of the age?"

"Yes! But it *is* a disease, my dear. Now, keep free from it. Look not before, nor after; but enjoy the *Now!* and make it as eternal as you can!"

Alas! for the good rector's philosophy, and alas! for all philosophy. On goes the eternal wheel — no ceasing, no stopping for human cries; but ever-varying, eternal change. And, one day in the early Spring, there came a peremptory, but polite order from her guardian to Miriam, and with it an auctioneer's bill, to be posted up on the gates of Glendarragh demesne; and specifying, down to the smallest detail, the articles of furniture that were to be sold in a fortnight's time — some of them, too, very dear to Miriam because of their associations. What is one to do — before Fate, the inexorable, and Destiny, the inevitable? One article was overlooked — the sym-

bols of the Curse. Everything else was to come under the hammer.

So far everything appeared to promise well for the designs of Mr. Holthsworth. It was quite clear that when Glendarragh was dismantled, there was no such thing as dwelling there. The servants, too, had received notice to leave, all wages being paid in advance to the auction-day. The eventful day came; but there was no auction. The auctioneer drove up in his smart trap, rubbed his hands, looked around to see that all was right for the eventful moment, when carriages and cabs would roll into the yard, and occupy the terrace, and he would commence his day's work on the "antique and valuable furniture of this ancient and historical mansion." Alas! there were no carriages, not even cabs. The gentry and nobility, to whom he had so pathetically appealed were conspicuous by their absence. A few loiterers hung around the premises. Twelve o'clock struck; the auctioneer was amazed. "It was unprecedented," he said, "in his experience." He waited for an hour. The very loiterers had vanished. Coppal alone put in his wild, ape-like face and grinned.

"Pu-pu-pu-put up dem ding-dongs," he said, "a-a-and I'll buy dem. He! he! he!"

He pointed to the great hall-clock, which struck the quarters, and whose low, deep tones had a peculiar fascination for him.

"Come here," said the auctioneer, peremptorily.

Coppal pulled down the loose lock of shaggy, grimy hair that hung on his forehead, and came into the hall.

"Where are the people, you fool?" angrily asked the auctioneer.

"D-de-de people? Wha-wha-what people?" said Coppal.

"The people that should be here," said the auctioneer. "What new devilment is going on amongst ye here?"

"De-de-divil is on your side," said Coppal. "De-de-dis is a 'Cant.'"

Then the truth dawned on the salesman. A "Cant" meant sales, compulsory and legal, of property sold under some debtor's act, and at the instigation of his creditors. It was decidedly unpopular in Ireland; and the word had gone around to city, town, and hamlet, that the sale had been ordered against Miss Lucas's express desire, and that only traitors to their country and cause would attend.

"I see," said the man of the hammer, "the auction must be postponed until further notice."

A few days after a deputation of the tenantry called upon Miriam. Ireland is a wonderful place for deputations. Deputations are supposed to settle everything. There are deputations to parish priests, if a school is vacant, or a chapel-woman has died, or a local sexton has been buried, side by side, at last, with those whom he had helped to inter. There are deputations to Bishops about vacant parishes, which the people would like to give to a favourite curate; deputations to County Councils, Grand Juries, Dispensary Committees; deputations to agents and landlords to reduce rents, and deputations to Leaguers to help them to defy them. And the deputations come prepared, not to reason and argue, but to carry their point. And, it is amusing sometimes, to see some venerable body, who are quite convinced they have reason and principle on their side, arguing and proving by every species of logic, that a certain thing cannot be done; and the deputation, calmly listening, as if they were open as children to conviction, then coolly departing to—have their own way. And so a deputation of the tenantry called on Miriam.

"We kem to ask you, Miss Miriam," said the foreman of the deputation, "to whom we are to pay our rint in future?"

"I am not very certain," said Miriam, who understood but little of her own position, and less of the law. "I suppose you will get legal notice in due time."

"We got thim," said the spokesman, holding up a sheaf of papers, "from some fellow in Dublin, an' begor, you'd

think he owned half the wurruld, and a good bit of the moon thrown in, the way he spakes. But we want to know from yer own lips, Miss, are you the owner of our land, or is it somebody else?"

"I presume I am the owner," said Miriam, "but the property is probably vested in a trustee, who —"

"Is that the naygur, wid a jaw like a blacking-brush, that was down here lately?" asked one of the other tenants. "Because, Miss, to tell you the thruth, we don't think much of *him*?"

"Yes, Mr. Holthsworth! He is my poor father's legal representative now —"

"To make a long story short, Miss Miriam," said the spokesman of the deputation, who insisted on his right to interpret the common opinion, "we've brought the rint to you," here he unbuttoned his great coat, and dragged out of his side-pocket a huge bundle of grimy notes, "because you have the best right to it. How are we to know whether you'd ever get a pinny of your rights from that fellow?"

"Oh! no, no, no!" said Miriam, anxiously pushing the notes aside. "You are all extremely kind, indeed; it would be illegal, and you would be again responsible. Unless, indeed," she said with some hesitation, "you wish me to spare you the trouble, and desire that I should forward the rent to Mr. Holthsworth in your names?"

"Thin, divil a note you'll get from us, Miss," said the farmer, replacing the money in his pocket, "unless you promise to keep it for yourself."

"But the law, my dear friends — you are very kind indeed, but you know that if I were to accept your money, Mr. Holthsworth could sue you, and perhaps do you harm."

"Make your mind aisy about that, Miss," said the farmer, looking around at his neighbours with an air of satisfaction, "but I'll tell you what it is, Miss. If you take our money, as our landlord, by the laws of the land, well and good. If you don't, divil a pinny will that

fellow get from us. We know somethin' about him. We'll lodge our money in your name in the Bank; and begobs, we'll tie it up so that even yerself cannot give it to anybody, but yerself."

"You are very kind," said Miriam, "but I am afraid it will involve you in great trouble."

"Make yer mind aisy, Miss, about that. If we get throuble, we can give it back on the double."

And because this aphorism rhymed neatly, the good farmer smiled at his success, as the deputation departed.

Miriam stood looking at them with a strange, wistful glance, as they passed down to the gate of the sphinxes. Their loyalty, their affection, for her, not of their faith, and almost a stranger, touched her deeply. As she watched them, one broke away from his companions, and returned.

"We have been sayin', Miss," he said, with a kind of blush on his rugged features, "that whin you come back to lift the Curse, you'll want many a good pound to put the ould place in repair. But, take our word for it we'll keep the war chest safe locked till you return. Good-bye, Miss Miriam. God wos never wantin' to the orphan!"

"Good-bye!" said Miriam sadly.

For, neither the law, nor its darling child, Mr. Holthsworth was to be balked. On a certain day in the following week, four huge vans drove up to Glendarragh House; and eight sturdy porters dismantled it; and packed away every article of furniture in it; and that night Miriam slept under a stranger's roof, if indeed, they could be called strangers at the Vicarage, who had been her dearest friends.

"There's wan thing stuck in the wall here," said a porter, as he looked around the bare halls and rooms, to see if anything had escaped him.

"What is it?" said the driver of the van.

"A quare thing, like a purcession," said the porter.

"Is it movable, or a fixture?" said the driver.

"It is nailed agin the wall," said the porter, "or stuck into it."

"Lave it there, thin, and come on," said the driver. "There's nothin' about it in our orders."

And so Destiny remained sunk deep in the wall of the doomed house.

After a little while, it became evident to Miriam that Destiny, too, was weaving a future for herself, and that the inexorable, and unseen goddess was not to be denied. It is a strange thing that no kindness can conquer pride — even the legitimate pride of feeling oneself an incumbrance on the charity of others. And, although the vicar and his wife would most gladly have retained the companionship of Miriam for the rest of her life, and would be willing to surround her with every substitute for home affection and comfort, she felt it was not to be. And so, on a certain day, Mr. Holthsworth did refurbish his rooms, although they were very exquisite already, for the reception of a lady; and Miriam began to make her farewells.

She had determined to take Anstie with her, as the position of the girl had become intolerable at home; and, after some reluctance, and only when she saw her father installed in a neighbour's house, where his pension was sufficient to support him, Anstie consented.

The evening before they left for Dublin, Anstie went down to the little chapel to say her farewell prayer there. She remained a long time, hidden in its gloom; and all the past, with its sweet and tranquil associations came back to her memory. Here she had heard her first Mass, peeping out from behind her mother's apron at the tremendous spectacle of the Altar, wondering, ignorant, dazed. Here, too, she had come with her classmates on the long, summer afternoons to learn her Catechism, and prepare for her first confession. Here, she made her First Communion that tremendous morning, when the heavens bent down to earth and swallowed up all its trivialities and littlenesses. Here, she was confirmed, full of nervous fears and trembling at the great, majestic Bishop; and here, oh! so many times she had heard

Mass, received the Sacraments; but here! too, had she approached the tremendous mysteries with her faith somewhat choked by vanity and the notice of men, and her charity cooled because she had blended human with Divine Love. Anstie was not, as we have seen, too impressionable; yet, there in the twilight, her tears fell sadly, as she promised all great and good things for her future, and besought God and His Mother to guide her through life. Then, she rose, and passed into the little churchyard, and knelt by her mother's grave. Here, too, she gave herself up to some sweet, sad meditations on the vanished life; here she breathed a silent prayer to the unseen spirit, that was yet watching over her; and taking from her bosom a little spray of early flowers, she kissed them, and laid them reverently on the grave. She rose up to depart, and found Declan Ahern standing near, looking intently at her.

She was much alarmed, for she had not heard that he had left the Asylum cured; and, besides, the dread of the past, and the insecurity that hangs around those who have been ever seriously demented, broke upon her startled imagination; and she stood, with her hands clasped before her, looking at him in speechless dread. He, too, continued looking at her for a long time, and then he said in a low, hollow, broken voice:—

"Anstie, I hard that you were goin' away for ever!"

"Yes," she said, nervously, "I am!"

"Don't be afeared of me, Anstie," he said, "'tis a lonesome place; but, if it were twenty times as lonesome, ye have nothin' now to fear from me."

"I'm not afraid of you, Declan," she said, somewhat reassured, "but Miss Miriam is waiting for me to pack her trunks, and I must be going."

"Wan minit, only wan," he said, trying to moisten his dry lips, and to get out his words. "I suppose," he continued, nervously, "there's no use in bringin' up the ould bisness agin, Anstie. But, perhaps—some time—in the future—oh! my God!" he almost shouted in an

accent of anguish, that made the girl's heart sink with remorse and contrition. She put out her hand.

"Declan," she said, "I treated you badly. God knows I am sorry."

"No, Anstie," he said, weeping. "It was all my fault. You were too good for me; an' I didn't know it."

"'Tis all the better, Deck," she said, placing her hand on his arm. "One of these days you will marry and settle down, and be happy with some better girl than me —"

He shook his head.

"Never, never!" he said. "I belonged to you, Anstie, body and sowl; and I'll never think of another."

He remained sunk in a kind of stupor. Anstie wished he would go; yet she felt the keenest pity for him, the keenest shame for herself.

"I want to ask you wan faver, Anstie," he said, not daring to look at her, for he distrusted his own fortitude.

"Would you ask the ould man to stay with us, till — till you come back? He'll be lonesome among strangers."

"But your father and mother, Deck —"

"The father and mother want it, too. He'll be no throuble, they said. The bit he ate won't matther, and wan fire will do for all; an' thin, 'twill make us sometimes think of ould times."

"Declan," said Anstie, now weeping freely, "you are too good. If I had known sooner — I'll tell father, an' he'll be sure to go to you."

"You know, Anstie," said the poor young fellow, not looking at her, but up at the sky, at the graves, at the flowers, "'twill remind us of you, too. I suppose wherever you are, you'll write to the ould man. You'll be changed a good dale, if iver you forget him. An' thin, 'twill be a bame of sunshine acrass our flure, whin we sees the postmark, an' your own bit of writin'. An' sure, I'll work up and get the schoolmasther to tache me betther, so that I can write back to you for your poor father. And, who knows, perhaps some day you may

be sick an' sore — I don't wish it, Anstie, or anything else but what is good for you — but it may happen that you would wish to come back to us agin; an' shure it's somethin' to know that ye have a little home in the ould place; an' I promise you before God and His Blessed Mother that I'll never spake of the ould affair agin."

"Declan," said Anstie, trying vainly to keep back her tears, "God bless you! You've a thrue heart!"

The following day, Anstie, with her little trunk well corded, drove in a farmer's cart the eight miles to the train. Miriam followed in the vicar's trap. The vicar's wife had taken the reins, and in her old matter-of-fact way, had said: —

"Now, John, we have no time to spare! Say good-bye to Miriam."

The old man, with his head uncovered, although the sun shone fiercely down upon him, came over to the side where Miriam sat.

"Good-bye, my dear. If ever you — that is — you know, this is your home always; and we'll be pleased, my wife and I —"

"John Crosthwaite, you're a fool. Go in out of the sun, or you'll get a stroke."

Miriam stooped down, and kissed the old man's forehead. Then, amidst tears from the weeping people and fervent prayers for her welfare to the Father of the orphan and the widow, she passed from their sight.

The vicar when he returned to his study wrote down at once, and with extreme care the following: —

"The great comet, Myrrha, discovered by the Rev. John Crosthwaite on the night of March 187—, must have now completed its cycle, and will probably appear in the south-west horizon, one of these nights."

After some reflection, he crossed out several words, and changed more. Then, because the paper looked untidy under the erasures, he tore it up; and taking a clean sheet, after some meditation and biting of the pen-handle, he wrote again: —

"The new star, Myrrha, in the constellation of the Lyre, and which was discovered by the Rev. John Crosswaite, with a four inch lens on the night of the 14th of March, 186—, has suddenly disappeared from the place in the heavens which she occupied, thus proving it to be, as the discoverer surmised, a variable star —"

"No, no," said the vicar, "that won't do! Variable? God forbid. The child is as true as the Polar!"

He bent down his head over the paper, which this time was blotted not with ink or pen, but with a tear.

BOOK II

BOOK II

XII

“THE WATCHMAN”

HERE, then, was our Miriam suddenly launched upon life from the quiet little haven where hitherto her years, comparatively happy, had been spent. It was an unpleasant change; but one so full of wonder and freshness that, for a while at least, the unpleasantness remained unrevealed to her consciousness. For Holthsworth took care to surround this beautiful girl, so suddenly and rudely transplanted from her more congenial surroundings with every care and comfort that a luxurious taste and great wealth could procure. And whilst he avoided, with much solicitude, any introductions that could lead her into certain circles of good society where he moved, he was also careful to bring her in touch with some milder spirits, who, without brilliancy or show, would yet be kind to the friendless girl. Had he a hope that those guileless natures would mould her thoughts in their own groove, and give them a bias towards himself? For now he had set his heart, with all the strength and determination of which such breasts are capable, on making Miriam his wife. Strong natures are attracted by the strong. Holthsworth did not want, as regnant queen of his household, any of your creeping, fawning women — white, murmuring doves, with wings of pearl to be stroked and caressed, and who give back plaintive little cries, and a certain measure of domestic felicity. He rather leaned towards the strong, the untamed spirits, defiant like himself, and with whom he might sometimes at least have the pleasure of a joust with tongue and temper. And Miriam seemed to him the very *replica* of his own

spirit. Her very defiance of him, her undisguised dislike and contempt only accentuated his desire to get into his power this eagle-spirit, and to conquer it. Whether he had baser motives, with a view to her property, is a matter of conjecture. He was enormously wealthy — had shares and stocks in half the mammon-markets of the world. But, such spirits are rapacious. Their appetite grows with eating.

Yet, surrounded by every comfort and luxury, Miriam, after the first period of wonderment had ceased, grew home-sick for the Oak-Valley, and the cliffs and the sea. And, as she grew to understand what hollowness lay beneath the glitter of society, how language, verily, was the veil of thought, and people lied with their lips, with their eyes, with the very shrug of their shoulders, she began to yearn for the simple, unsophisticated people she had left — for the dear old guileless, kindly minister and his loving wife; for the rough dependents of Glendarragh, who worshipped her, for the fishermen and labourers; yea, even for the fool, who followed her like a dog.

Then, like all sensitive and noble souls, brought suddenly from solitude into chill contact with the world, she shrank into herself, and folded up her thoughts and wishes in swaddling-clothes of silence. Not that she ever became morose or selfish. The remembrance of the past and the sweet natures she had known would be quite enough to antagonise the present; and as healing woods in acrid waters, to purify the more or less hostile elements around her. But she was flung back upon herself, and had to find other resources for an eager and restless, though serene spirit, than were to be found in human society.

Holthsworth had a splendid library of splendid books, splendidly bound. He had read a good deal, and could speak well on the authors — the recognised masters — of every national literature, and it was a pure physical pleasure to look at, or take down any of the magnificent volumes on his shelves, and merely feel its creamy soft-

ness, or watch and study the beautiful colours that were ingrained in its calf or morocco bindings, and the large, clear type, and broad margins of the text. On his library table, too, were to be found papers and magazines of every type and colour of thought, from the thin sheets of some ephemeral journal to the large, firm quarto of some great literary organ. Over these Miriam lingered many and many an hour, drinking in inspiration from great minds and wondering, wondering at the treasures, as if some Aladdin lamp had opened up to her a hidden cave where the wealth of generations had been massed.

One day her eye lighted on a paper called “The Watchman.” It was a thin sheet of only eight pages; but paragraph after paragraph seemed to have been written with a pen dipped in flame. The words burned with the fierce enthusiasm of a conviction that was a faith; and the burden of the teaching was the ceaseless war between labour and capital; and the rights, the rights, — the wrongs, the wrongs of the poor. Society was solemnly arraigned as a criminal conspiracy against the weak and the suffering; and all generous and courageous natures were summoned to take part in the war, just now inevitable, against this society, until it was remodelled and reformed on a new, and more legitimate basis. Here and there were burning sentences from masters of epigram and *maximes*; and in certain columns, long, deep, rolling stanzas of verse, each line a trumpet-call to such a spirit as Miriam’s. The girl, keenly alive to her own disabilities, and her sufferings from this same Society; and sympathising heart and soul with the poor and the workers, read, with kindling eyes and heaving breast, these flaming sentences. Week by week she looked forward to the Thursday evening when this sheet, wet from the printer’s hands, would appear on the library table. She took it promptly to her own room, and read every sentence of it, not measuring its wisdom or prudence, or practicability, but blind, with the excess of feeling and enthusiasm, to everything but its hot and generous appeal. One day there appeared

in an angle of the paper Speranza's "Year of Revolutions." It was the summing up of every lesson in its most beautiful form. Miriam committed the words to memory; and afterwards whiled away many a weary moment, and scattered many a dream of despondency by repeating the stirring lines.

Then, at last, she did what all who have great convictions long to do. She took up her pen. With fear and trembling, yet with the firmness that comes from a strong conviction, she wrote from her heart some things that she had been long dreaming over. She read her writing over again and again, spoiled some things by remodeling them; but at length sent the flaming epistle to the editor of "The Watchman."

That good man leaped from his office stool as he read them. Then, he handed them to his sub-editor, who read them more coolly, and said:—

"Put it in! Madame Roland has come to life!" And so Miriam made her *début* in literature.

And for many weeks during that winter she poured into the editorial office paper after paper, dealing with one form or another of Socialistic theories. Sometimes, it might be a little poem; sometimes, a brief comment on the sayings of leading Socialists in Germany; sometimes, a review of some new book; but always with one gospel—the irreconcilable antipathy of the classes that make up a Commonwealth, and the necessity of formulating new and more human social systems and surroundings. There were, of course, some qualms—not of conscience, for conscience never rebuked her—but that timidity, that belongs to all feminine natures would recoil sometimes, when she thought:—

"What if these ideas were put into practice? What, if the masses rose up; and in fire and ruin taught the lessons that I am teaching in cold print?"

But this seemed far away and unlikely. Meanwhile, here was the delight of seeing herself in print, and of hearing again and again, the plaudits that came from

the outside world, and were echoed to her from the editorial office.

Once, she was a little more disturbed. It was, when, having sent a marked copy of the paper down to Mrs. Crosthwaite at her old home, she got back a warning answer, the strongest condemnation of such principles, although the authoress was evidently unknown.

"John," wrote Mrs. Crosthwaite, "says that such ideas are subversive to all morality and religion. He wonders how such a paper could have reached your gentle hands; and he says that you should burn all future copies that you find. I don't understand it; but it must be all wrong. Take care, dearest! Take care! The old ogre who has caged my pretty bird may have his own designs in placing such poison before her. We shall defeat him yet; as your tenants are defeating him now. They won't pay him one penny until he can prove title. Oh, if you were only here, our little Queen of Hearts! what a place Glendarragh would be once more!"

This, and many other, kind warning expressions did disturb Miriam a little. But only for a moment. Great causes need great sacrifices, and was she not called of Heaven to make them? But sometimes, when visiting in the city, her heart stood still, when she heard the vigorous condemnations of society on her opinions, and even her work, and the anathemas which rained from soft lips on doctrines which were as dear to her, and as true, as religion. How she yearned for some kindred soul into whose sympathetic bosom she could pour her impassioned ideas and sublime hopes for the future. If she had heard even one sympathetic word, one little sigh of tenderness for bleeding humanity, it would be enough. But no! "The poor in a lump is bad," — that was the burden of all conversation, the one revealed dogma of society, and with it, the eternal cry for Force! Force! to keep down the turbulent elements that everyone knew were seething beneath the polished surface of civilisation.

Once, she timidly ventured to escape for a moment

from a lady-companion (a Madame B——, who lived in Harcourt Street, and was a kind of dependent on Holthsworth's charity), and to rush down a narrow alley that opened off Sackville Street to a certain house, that had great attractions for her highly-wrought imagination. She drew back at its aspect of sordid and blackened meanness. But no! there was no mistake. There, over the fan-light, were the unmistakable words in yellow ochre, a tawdry substitute for gold lettering: "THE WATCHMAN." The one window seemed to be pasted all over with copies of the paper, festooned with numberless cobwebs. She would have drawn back, but her impetuous spirit would not allow her. She entered. The long, dark room, lighted at one end by a dirty window, was dingy in the extreme. The damp smell of wet newspapers, the odour of printer's ink and oil were everywhere. Great files of the paper seemed to fill up the shelves that stretched up to the ceiling; and the floor, where it was not littered with scraps of paper, was filthy with the mud of many boots, and here and there darkened with huge splotches of ink.

Miriam walked slowly and hesitatingly along the dirty floor. A solitary clerk, who had been perched on a high desk at the end of the room, came forward, his quill pen behind his ear, and his hands stuck deep in his pockets.

"I wish to see the editor," said Miriam.

"Not visible yet above our horizon," said the clerk.

"Well, Mr. Stenson, then — can I see him?"

"Not visible either," said the clerk. "In fact, quite eclipsed."

She turned to go.

"Who, shall I say, has called?" he said.

"It does not matter!" she said, shortly, as she left the place.

The clerk's further ideas were not complimentary; and Miriam's? Her heart sank down as she sought her friend in a news-shop quite near. The newsboys clamoured round her, merry as mudlarks, grinning, laughing,

cheating, singing. One or two labourers calmly smoked leaning up against a dead wall in the street. Through the open door of a public-house she heard the sounds of revelling and drunken singing, although the day was yet young; the 'prentice-girls and shop-employees, who were home for dinner, passed gaily by, linked arm-in-arm, and tossing their foolish little heads in playful scorn at young men, who stood idly by to watch them. Where was the down-trodden and trampled proletariat? Where the misery, the squalor, the depressed heads and sad and worn faces of the many who were the victims of a vicious and selfish oligarchy?

Miriam's enthusiasm began to ooze out slowly under the influence of that great disillusionist — experience. She regained her friend, and they drove home slowly through the crowded streets.

"Madame," said Miriam, when they had passed out from the roar of the city into a tranquil suburb, "where are the poor? I mean, where are the submerged and down-trodden masses of the people?"

Madame B—— looked at her charge curiously. "I don't know, my dear," she said. "People in our sphere of life know nothing of these things. There are, of course, carriage-people, and people who walk; and there are Papists or kitchen people and their masters —"

"What?" said Miriam, flushing. "Do you mean, Madame B——, that it is religion makes the difference and nothing else?"

"Of course, my dear child," said Madame B——, sweetly. "What else? There is no other distinction in this country. The Papists are poor, and our serfs; the Protestants are wealthy, and the masters — what more?"

Miriam was silent. New lights were beginning to break upon her. Then she said: —

"In that case, Madame, Papists, as you say, are never allowed into good" — she gulped down the word — "Society?"

"Never!" said Madame B——, dogmatically. "Or

if ever," she said, settling her hands more comfortably in her muff, "on account of their accidental wealth, or other circumstance, they are merely tolerated, never assimilated. But ask your Guardian about these things. He understands them so much better than I."

XIII

A WORKMEN'S CONCLAVE

IN an upper room of a hotel, kept by an Italian in a back street in Dublin, three men met one evening in the early winter of the year in which Miriam Lucas was summoned to Dublin by her guardian. One was evidently a mechanic—a great burly, red-faced, strong-handed man, with some tokens of the smoke and smut of his calling hidden away in creases on his neck and face and hands. The second was a pale-faced, calm, rather stupid-looking individual, who, if one might judge by his dress and manner, had emerged for some considerable time from the condition of labour, and had passed into that of ruler or organizer. He was well-dressed, wore a huge gold chain with heavy seals, and dropped his h's. The third was a Cassius—thin as a consumptive, his hair tossed wildly down on a forehead beneath which gleamed eyes, which would be ferocious, were they not rather filled with a light in which the dreaming soul saw pictured a new Heaven and a new earth above the smouldering ashes of a burnt-out civilisation. The mechanic was ill at ease, as if in the presence of superiors, and as if called upon to determine between his instincts and his conscience. The young dreamer was ill at ease, as he pulled down strand after strand of a deep, drooping moustache. The Englishman alone was calm, as he looked, with a certain kind of curious and pitying amazement at his companions.

He had some whiskey and water on a table near him, which he occasionally sipped; he smoked calmly a large briar-wood pipe, and read, or appeared to read, and to be altogether engrossed in, the sheets of a newspaper, but he was watching eagerly every gesture and symptom

of the two excitable natures with whom he was playing a somewhat desperate game. It was their very nervousness—the want of volition on the part of one, the total absence of caution on the part of the other, that excited his contempt. He, like his race, was built so solidly, made up his mind so rapidly, pursued his course so unflinchingly, and tossed aside regret or remorse for failure so easily, that he disdained these sensitive and delicate natures, which seemed to be always regretting the past, or conjecturing the future, without regard to the all-important present.

Cassius went striding up and down the room, his hands clenched behind his back so fiercely they were white from the pressure; the mechanic sat humbly on a chair, which he appeared to regard as a stool of repentance; and he looked from time to time deprecatingly at the others, as if he would apologise for not being able to reach up to their demands. After a long silence, he opened out his hands and said:—

“I must be candid, gentlemen, and above board. I can’t reckon on the min.”

“In Gawd’s name, why?” said the Englishman. He did not see the use of the expletive; but he thought it necessary to be emphatic in addressing Irishmen. “Cawn’t they see it is for their own interests?”

“They can, an’ they can’t,” said the mechanic. “Their women are agin it, an’ the priests.”

The Englishman was wise enough to say nothing on these subjects. He was playing a game, and could not show his hand.

Not so Cassius. He brought his bony, nervous hand down on the table with a ringing blow, and hissed:—

“It is so, Newton,” he cried, trying to speak in a suppressed voice. “You can’t understand it. Our men are dragged by the apron-strings still. ‘Lie down,’ ‘be content,’ ‘be poor,’ ‘be satisfied’; ‘’tis all the same in the end’—what can you do with a race emasculated by such philosophy?”

"Nothing," said the Englishman, "until you teach them different doctrines. Is there no one amongst you, fire-eating rebels, that could tell them to lift up their heads and be men?"

"Not that I know of," said Cassius, sadly. "Besides, if we had a Mirabeau, or a Danton, they wouldn't listen to him. It is this friar, with his eternal preachment on the vanity of this life, and the verity of eternity, who is turning their hot blood into water."

The Englishman arose, and coming over to where the young fanatic sat, he laid his hand on his shoulder and said with a smile:—

"Couldn't we win over that friar to our side? Eh?"

"No, you cannot," said the young man, sullenly. "If you mean money, you are mad. You don't know us. If you mean argument, he'll beat you hollow. He can prove to you that all discontent comes from imagination—that every improvement in the condition of the workman clamours for another—that there never can be rest or repose, so long as the fancy is excited by dreams of independence and wealth. And what is worse; if you could win him, it would be only half-way. The moment you said 'match,' 'petroleum,' 'rifle,' he would kick like a mule, or fly screaming to some desert."

"Well, I'm blessed but yer *are* kids!" said the Englishman, with a touch of contempt in his voice. Then, as if remembering something, he said:—

"What about the Press?"

"Tied, muzzled, handcuffed, fettered—all, except the *Watchman*. By the way, Greevy," said Cassius, turning suddenly to the mechanic, "who wrote that article in Saturday's *Watchman* about Hindu and Hibernian caste?"

"I don't know," said the mechanic, as if tired of the discussion. "It was all Greek to us!"

"Perhaps so! but it had the right ring. Can you find out for me?"

"I might," said the mechanic, with indifference. Cas-

sius arose, and beckoning the mechanic into a corner, he put his hand on his shoulder, and said in a low, earnest tone: —

"This is a matter of no consequence to me, Greevy — but of life and death to you! Listen! I can earn my three pounds a week quietly and easily. I have only to sit at my desk, dip my pen in ink, cover a certain quantity of white paper with ink, and take my salary. You have to work from dawn to dark — sometimes from dark to dawn — for what? Half what I can pocket. Furthermore, you have to see your own hands put over your head by influence — weren't you an old man when Hunt came into the works? You were! Well, where is he now, and where are you? He, your junior, kicks you about. 'Tis 'Here, Greevy, you, Sir!' And 'Why are you late, Greevy, this morning? I tell you I'll have to sack you!' Isn't it so?"

The face of the mechanic was kindling under the cutting words, and his hands were twitching in his pockets.

"'Tis thrue, Mr. Stenson," he said. "By God, 'tis thrue."

"Very good! I don't want to excite you, Greevy. I'm only talking plainly, as man to man. The thing doesn't concern me at all. You know that as well as I. Don't you?"

"Yes, Sir, I do! Go on. We all know you are the friend of the workingman."

"Very good! I don't want to pose as your friend. I want nothing from you, or your fellow workmen. As I said, these two fingers can earn all that I want. Well! You tried to get your boy on the works. Don't start! I know it. You failed. The engineer said there was no vacancy. But Hunt's son, a half-idiot, was taken on during the week; and has today a bigger salary than you. You know more than the engineer himself about the machinery. But what do they care? You are but a Dublin man and a Papist. And I tell you, if you are there to the day of Judgment, 'twill be the same story. You'll

work; but others will be paid for your brains and your labour."

"I see it all, Mr. Stenson," said the mechanic, fairly roused. "But you see, here's the trouble. Father Hugo says 'don't'! He dreads violence. He says we are not like the English that can go so far, and no farther. He says we're Irish; and when once set going, there's no more stopping us than stopping the limited mail passing Hazelhatch. And, then —"

"That's all right! But will Father Hugo, or any other Father Hugo, or the Archbishop himself, put you over Hunt, or Hunt under you?"

"Begobs, no! They'd turn him out, neck and crop, if he interfaired!"

"Very well, then! What do they propose? Here, we'll give them a fair field and no favour! Go to them — Ask them to fight your battles for a month. We won't interfere. But give us a show at the end, when they fail."

"As for that, you may commence now," said the mechanic. "They can do nothing for us. 'Tis all Freemasonry from ind to ind."

"Very good. Now, here is your chance. He has all England and Scotland behind him. He has a cool head. He knows what's what. The law won't grip him, or any one that follows him. Give him a fair chance, anyhow!"

"But the min — the min," said the mechanic, bewildered. "You cannot stir them. There's only wan man in the city that can stir their blood. An' he won't!"

"Who is he?" said Stenson, looking the mechanic between the eyes. "Do I know him?"

"You do well. You were at the Hall the night he spoke before."

"Albrecht? The blind bat from Trinity!"

"The very man. But I tell you, he can see farther in the dark than most men in the light."

"Then we must get him, at any cost!"

Stenson remained a long time in a kind of reverie.

The Englishman was calmly reading beneath the gasalier at the round table.

"By the way," said Stenson at length, "when did you hear from Minnie?"

Greevy started back, as if struck.

"Minnie? Minnie? What do you know of Minnie?" he said hoarsely. "Why do you fling that shame in my face?"

"Because now is your time," said Stenson. "If you do as you are ordered, the man that wrought shame on you is in your power."

Greevy's face was whitening and reddening under strong emotion. His whole frame shook.

"Yes," continued Stenson, relentlessly. "Your daughter is on the streets of Chicago this night; and the man that drove her to elope with his coachman, is now at the Gaiety. I saw him with a white young girl by his side yesterday in his barouche. Probably, if she saw your child tonight, she would spit upon, and spurn her!"

"Hell's ind to me!" gasped the mechanic, as if he was stricken with apoplexy. "Say no more! Lave the rest to me!"

He took up his hat and left the room.

"I thought I'd fetch him," said Stenson to Newton. "A whole convent of friars won't stop him now."

"I 'eard you say somethink about his daughter?" queried Newton.

"Yes! A giddy, handsome girl. She was hand in glove with the coachman of a scoundrelly director, named Holthsworth. He wouldn't allow them marry. It was supposed he had evil designs on the girl. Anyhow, they eloped. And, as usual, she was cast off when they landed in America. But Greevy will never forgive Holthsworth, living or dead!"

"Then, how goes it now?" said the practical Englishman.

"Thusly," said Stenson. "The whole thing, now, is to get one or two fierce articles into the *Watchman*. Then,

to convoke a meeting in the Mechanics' Hall, and get this young Albrecht to address them. He'll carry them through Hell-Fire!"

"I can't understand. How's that?"

"Well, you see, in the first place, he is a gentleman; and that counts for everything with the Irish, who still hold the old feudal sympathies with the 'quality.' Then, he is a Protestant; and they will follow a Protestant where they would hang a Catholic leader. And then, he has got the gift of the gab; and, if you can wrap an Irishman's intellect in a cloud of words, you may lead him where you like."

"You're strange folk," said the Englishman, meditatively. "Now, I got orders not to spare the rhino; but it isn't the rhino but the lingo ye want."

"Money doesn't go far here in the way of bribes," said Stenson. "It is easier and cheaper to work on our temper than on our pockets."

"Well, be it so. But my time is limited, Mr. Stenson. If your men will give us a helping hand now, it will never be forgotten. If not, we'll let them drift."

"I can only do my share," said Stenson. "But, by the Most High God, Newton," he cried, his eyes flashing fury, "it isn't for love of your country or countrymen that I am taking up this movement. Mark that! I'd no more trust the English than I'd trust the Devil!"

"That's all right, old fellow," said the Englishman, grasping Stenson's bony hand in his fat palm. "We don't trouble about motives if we get work."

That same evening, and about the same hour, a tall, gaunt figure, with a slight stoop in the shoulders, walked slowly up and down the wet flags outside the office of the *Watchman*. There was a soft, drizzling mist, that cleared the street of passers by much to his delight. Now and again he stopped and peered anxiously up and down the street. Then, impatiently, he resumed his walk. Once or twice he entered the office, and eagerly inquired if anyone had called; but no; no one had entered or left. At

last, as the city clocks tolled ten, a closely muffled female figure came swiftly around a corner, and after one or two looks of eager inquiry, entered the office. In a few minutes one of the clerks came out, and told the eager and expectant young man that he was wanted inside. The Editor briefly pointed with his pen to the young lady, who was now unveiled.

"Your distinguished correspondent, Mr. Albrecht," he said.

Albrecht uncovered with all reverence, and was about to make a pretty speech, when the lady said:—

"Is it you, Ian? No other name could have summoned me forth tonight!"

"I beg pardon. I am confused; and my eyes are so weak —"

"And it is a long time since we met and played together. You must have forgotten your old playmate — Myrrha Lucas?"

"Myrrha — Miriam — can it be possible? Some College friends have been speaking of you lately. But we had no idea you were in Dublin. How you have grown! Why, you are quite a woman!"

Miriam blushed at the compliment, and smiled at the simplicity.

"I wasn't aware that I had College friends?" she said.

"Oh, yes! Ireton and Ashley seem to have known you well."

He did not see the shade of annoyance that passed across her face.

"And you, my little Myrrha," he continued, forgetting the woman before him, "you wrote that inspired article. For I tell you, it is inspired. The fire of genius flames along every line. Did you write it all?"

"All," said Miriam, simply.

"Then, we have got all we want, Merritt," he said, turning to the Editor. "The cause has its Sibyl and its prophetess."

They turned and left the office together.

"I must see you home," said Albrecht. "'Tis late, and I should be in my rooms; but I can frame an excuse. No," he continued, with a smile, seeing her surprise at the words, "I won't prevaricate, but I shall tell the whole truth, which is but half the truth. Everyone does it. But, no matter! Where do you live, and when did you come up?"

Miriam answered briefly.

"Your guardian? Who?" said Albrecht, hastily.

"Mr. Holthsworth. We are at Rathgar; but I have permission to remain with a friend at Harcourt Street to-night."

"Holthsworth! Holthsworth! You have fallen into evil hands, Myrrha! There must be a sad story, and a long one, there. I heard all about your father's disappearance. God grant it is only a disappearance; and that someone may arise to take you from the grasp of that hound. But—there, I have a lot to ask you! How did you conceive those ideas? They are rare in our class."

"And how did you conceive them?" she replied. "I have learnt them slowly but surely —"

"You cannot have seen any books down in that dreadful hollow," he interrupted. "It has taken me many years to divest myself of all my class prejudices, and to see that there is no greater crime against humanity than the classification of the species by rank and money. But you — how could you have heard of such things?"

"I had a better teacher than you," she replied.

"How? What?" he asked.

"Experience," she said, simply. "But I have a lot to ask you, Ian," she continued. "When shall I see you again?"

"You'll remain in town to-morrow," he asked eagerly.

"Yes," she said, "till dinner-time. I may not come in again for some time."

"Then I may call in the forenoon?" he said.

"Certainly. I shall tell Madame B——"

"And I shall not come alone. I may bring a friend, may I not?" he asked.

"Ye—es," she answered, dubiously. "If it is a friend. This is the house. Good-night!"

XIV

A BREACH OF RULE

WHEN Miriam entered the drawing-room the following day, in response to the card that was sent in by Ian Albrecht, she became suddenly aware of a new sensation—that she was acting against social conventions, and that her little rebellion was already punished by conscience, and the possibility of disagreeable consequences. She hated artificiality so much, that she never saw that all things in heaven and on earth are governed by rule; and that the open violation of such rule must necessarily entail suffering. But she had been so much in the habit of repressing every attempt to make her conform to ways that she despised for their very littleness, that now, when a suspicion glanced across her mind that this meeting with Albrecht was not quite correct, she at once suppressed it with a kind of secret disdain, and held out her hand cordially to him. When he murmured something about his friend, “of whom I spoke, Mr. Ireton,” she bowed to the latter, and said:—

“I think I have met Mr. Ireton before.”

“Yes,” said Hugh, gallantly forgetting the incident at the Admiral’s, “I hope, Miss Lucas, that my quondam patient has done well.”

“Dwyer?” she replied. “Yes! Your prompt intervention that day saved his life.”

“That is gratifying,” said Hugh. “Ashley and I, that is my comrade you may remember, have retained pleasant memories of that day.”

She was silent.

“And I think,” said Hugh, who was astonished at his own courage, “I may add, that both he and I were very sorry for your great bereavement.”

"You are very kind," said Miriam, simply.

"I may also say," said Hugh, carried along by his own emotions, and the rather kindly manner in which Miriam received him, "that I was never so angry and bitter in my life, as that day at the Admiral's, when you were so shamefully treated."

Miriam flushed a little, and then grew pale again.

"I believe it was nothing very exceptional," she said. "I understand that such things occur at all these meetings. That these are the ways and manners of good society."

"Not always, nor everywhere, I should hope," said Albrecht, breaking in. "There is a certain hollowness everywhere, I should say, but it does not generally reach the positive cruelty of which Ireton speaks, and of which he has spoken to me before."

"I don't know," said Miriam sadly. "It appears to be everywhere. It seems to me sometimes that we need a terrible upheaval, and then a reforming of all things on a new system."

"That was the burden of your paper," said Albrecht. "Don't start, Myrrha. I have no secrets from Ireton; and your secret is as safe with him, as with me. Nay," he continued, looking at both with his large, dim eyes, "I would wish you two to know one another well. You and I, Myrrha, could hardly drive the chariot of life in safety. We should court destruction. But Ireton is a calm, prudent fellow, with a good eye and steady hand."

He spoke of the political propaganda in which they were engaged; but there seemed to be some subtler meaning in his words, that made Miriam stare at him in silence. It seemed to her quick fancy to be a kind of quiet rejection; as if there were between them an unspoken secret, or rather as if Albrecht was determined that Miriam should understand that, though they were old friends and playmates, and now linked in common sympathies about social matters, there were to be no closer relations under any circumstances, for that a great gulf yawned

between. Albrecht never noticed the look of consternation on her face, though his great, dim eyes seemed to be wandering all over her; but he continued in a slow, melodious manner, which excitable people so often affect, until something spurs them into forgetfulness:—

“I was saying that I cordially agree with your view, that at stated periods, when things have grown old, and cumbersome, it is in the order of things that they should come all to pieces in some sudden cataclysm, and then be reconstructed in new forms more suitable to the circumstances of the age, and the world’s progress. I would have suggested to you as a comparison what occurs in the physical universe, where suns grow old, break up, become meteorites, gases, atoms, and then in the eternal laboratory are reconstructed into stars, systems, and planets again. So it is with society. Certain conditions reach their term and evaporate to give way to, or rather to form the elements of new social conditions. We have just touched the term, or end of one of those epochs here; and no doubt, we shall succeed in re-forming a new and wholesomer condition of things out of the remnants, or débris of that which is not worthy to last any longer.”

“You must know, Miss Lucas,” said Hugh Ireton, interposing, “that I don’t think with Ian on this matter. I assure you we have had some stiff academical debates up yonder in Trinity on these vexed questions; but it does not much matter. They are not likely to proceed beyond the academical state.”

“And I tell you, Hugh,” said Ian, straightening himself on his chair, and clenching his right hand, “that they will proceed further, and further, until we smash up the whole hollow lie, and make men lead honest and veracious lives.”

“You won’t succeed in Ireland, Ian,” said Hugh. “Or, if you did it would be under such utter ruin, that nothing could justify it.”

“All day long,” continued Albrecht, as if in a tone of soliloquy, “the poor are ground under foot, trampled

upon; they appeal to men for justice: 'tis denied them. They cry to Heaven for vengeance; Heaven stares dumbly at them. Oh! 'tis awful to hear what you do hear, and stand impotent before it. To hear men prating of justice, whilst their hands are steeped in iniquity; to hear them denouncing the wickedness of the poor, and their own sins crying to Heaven for vengeance; to hear that law and order are everything, no matter what brutality is exercised under that law and order; to see men, forever plucking motes from the bleared eyes of the starving workman, and no man dare say, There is a beam in your own! And the law, the law behind it all, bracketing all this iniquity; and worst of all, men coolly accepting the law's infallibility and society's verdict, as if it were the Voice on Sinai, or its thunder."

He coughed a little, stopped, took out a white silk handkerchief, and moistened it with his tongue. Then stared wildly at it. As if reassured, he replaced the handkerchief in his pocket.

"Pardon me, Myrrha," he said humbly, "but I am always expecting to read my death-sentence here."

"I am always telling him, Miss Lucas," said Hugh, "that he is over-exerting and over-exciting himself. He's as headstrong as a mule. Can't you persuade him to get out of this business? It is killing him. He's certainly threatened with phthisis; and all this thing is wearing him steadily into it."

"Do, Ian," said Miriam sympathetically. "You are not fit for rough work like this, especially as you think it will grow more serious."

"And leave it to girls and children to be worked out?" he replied.

"You have not been wronged," she said. "You have no score against Society. Besides, you have a mother to look to. You know how she loves you, Ian, at least must love you, if she is now what she was when I remember her —"

"Yes," he replied, passing his hand across his forehead,

"she is all that and more. You must come and see her soon, Myrrha. She'll be so pleased and delighted to see you."

"Would she? Do you really believe so?" said Miriam.

"Of course, of course, I take it for granted," he said, dubiously.

"And then when all would be revealed, she would turn on me as a traitor, as well as an interloper. No! I know the world now. I have to walk my way alone. But, you have everything to lose — position, honour, wealth, even life —"

"I have thought it all over," he said, "and am prepared to make the sacrifice. But, look here, Miriam, get rid of your ideas of solitude. The world is not all bad. Come out, and see it a little. It is horrible to think of your being shut up there, in a splendid prison-house with that wretch."

"He has been extremely kind to me," she said, "since I came, or rather was forced to Dublin."

"Perhaps. But he is a ruffian. The men have many a grudge against him; and if ever Greevy gets his hand on his throat — well, this is not fit for a young lady's ears. But, Myrrha, Myrrha, how did it all happen? What put you in that fellow's power?"

"You know he was father's confidential agent and adviser," she replied. "And he is now trustee of the property in Glendarragh, under my father's will."

"But how do you stand towards him? Are you with him of your own will; or has he used legal compulsion towards you?"

"I don't know," she said, looking at him hopelessly, "it's all surrounded in mystery — my mother's history, my father's disappearance, this man's evil shadow — all I know is, there is some dark mystery somewhere, everywhere, and no one seems able to explain it."

"Then, you are in the toils of the wicked one," he exclaimed. "Beware, Myrrha, beware!"

"I can do nothing," she said simply. "I cannot go

hither or thither without his permission. The law of the land, he says, is on his side, and he is omnipotent."

"There it is again — 'the law of the land' — the abettor of every infamy, the ally of every traitor and miscreant, the apology for every crime. Yes," he cried vehemently, "we must smash that law in pieces first by defying it; and then—well then, all will come well. But again, Myrrha," he cried, rising up, "I won't have you, my old playmate, locked up with this fellow. My mother and some lady friend will call upon you; and you must come out. Have any ladies called yet?"

"Not one!" said Miriam, smiling. "You don't seem to realise, Ian, that I am an exception, and shall remain so. If I could only discover my mother's secret, or where she is!"

"Well, at least," said Ian, affecting a gaiety he did not feel, "you have two champions here in Dublin that are sworn your knights —"

"Say three," said Hugh, wishing to raise the girl's spirits. "Ashley is with us; and perhaps the most valiant of the three!"

"Yes, three knights, sworn to help you," said Ian. "And, by Jove," he cried vehemently, "if ever it comes to a test of strength or manhood, you may count on three thousand. And I am not sure," he said, as Miriam made a gesture of dissent, "things are ripening fast; and, if I mistake not, we are pushing rapidly to the crisis that all brave men desire. Now, good-bye! and to relieve your solitude, pen a few more of these flaming articles. And write straight from your heart. Humanity, suffering, claims you as a suffering sister."

Her eyes kindled under the inspiring words. She felt now that in all her rebellious or angry moods against society, she was not alone; and that therefore she was right. Her feelings were those of the great toiling masses, wronged as she was, humiliated as she had been. A wretched oligarchy, under the name of society, were apparently trampling down the whole race; and it was

this horrible perversion of natural law that was accountable for all the misery and crimes of humanity. She saw, as in one glance, because it was a familiar subject of her thoughts, all that was wretched and sinful and forlorn pass before her eyes — the toiling millions with their horny hands and the sweat beaded on their brows; she saw the weary mothers clasping half-starving children to their breasts; young maidenhood festering in slums of cities; brave young toilers by hand or brain refused means of utilising their abilities and condemned to inglorious idleness; injustice everywhere rampant; men caballing together for the overthrow of their fellowmen; anger, jealousy, hate everywhere — and she thought she saw the wronged and the oppressed, as they passed by, lift their manacled hands or their tearful eyes to her, and say in their mute sorrow: — Yea, thou art our sister by right of suffering; Thine is a hereditary wrong, as well as a personal injustice; and thou hast the power to help. God has given it to thee! See thou, O our suffering sister, that thou misuse not thy gift. We will demand of thee otherwise an awful retribution!

But she choked down those feelings; and, apparently oblivious or careless of all that Ian had said, she called him a little aside in the hall whither she had accompanied them. “Mr. Ireton is quite right, Ian,” she said. “This is no work for you. It will burn you up and consume your strength in a little time. This must be the work of rougher natures.”

“Like yours, then,” he said, smiling. “No, Myrrha, life is so short, so fleeting, it is absolutely worthless if we do not ennoble it somehow; and this is my way and yours, if I mistake not. But, again, let me say, you must not drive in my chariot. It is too fast for thee. And thou art too precious to be endangered. Write as much as you please; but when it comes to action, you must step aside. And, one word more. Ireton is my friend and yours. Promise me that you will obey implicitly any injunction of his, should a crisis arise, and I should not see you.”

She looked troubled, but said yes! The next time she saw Ian Albrecht was through a mist of tears for his sufferings. The soul had worn its way, here and there, through the frail flesh, and was about to go forth in pain and sorrow.

As she re-entered the drawing-room, she was suddenly confronted with Society in the person of her hostess. Society was not angry, Society never is angry. But Society was sad. Society was pained and grieved.

"Miriam dearest," Society said, "what have you done? Sit down, child; what have you done?"

"Nothing, Madame! Nothing wrong that I am aware of!"

"But, surely, child," said Society, "you must have known how exceedingly improper it was to meet and entertain young gentlemen, and alone!"

"I cannot see anything wrong," said Miriam in her perfect innocence, "in renewing an old acquaintance of my childhood, and his friend. I am quite sure Mr. Albrecht saw no harm in it, nor I."

"Let me tell you, Miriam, that there are strange rumours afloat in society about Mr. Albrecht and his companions. He is just the last person your excellent guardian would wish you to meet."

"I am not a child, Madame —" said Miriam, bristling a little at her guardian's name, "and," she added with emphasis, "I am not a slave. Mr. Holthsworth can control my affairs, but I am my own mistress about my own actions."

"I don't like such sentiments, Miriam," said Madame — half-frightened at the girl's determination, "but I know Mr. Holthsworth will be gravely displeased if he ever shall hear of this visit. He is exceedingly punctilious about social matters, apart altogether from his feelings in this case."

"As I have said, Madame —" repeated Miriam, "I cannot accept Mr. Holthsworth as master and judge of all my actions and conduct. But, if you think he would

make you responsible in this matter, I shall tell him the whole thing, and exonerate you."

"Oh, no, no," said Madame — hastily, "please don't! He shall never know it; and better he shouldn't. Will you, must you go back this evening?"

"Yes, I think so," said Miriam. "But I am very sorry, Madame, if I have pained you. You see I have been brought up without a — friend."

She was going to say "mother," but the word would not come.

"Yes, dear," said Madame — embracing the girl amidst her tears, "I know all. But do not forget you have friends now."

XV

A MONK IN TRINITY

ARTHUR ASHLEY and Hugh Ireton sat together in the rooms of the latter one cold, bleak, wintry morning in the decline of that year. Both young men were grave and they spoke not in the connected way men speak, when only trifles interest them, and a pause is embarrassing, but in that swift, abrupt manner, interspersed with great gaps of silence, when the speakers feel that the subject matter of conversation demands thought. Of the two Arthur Ashley was the more composed, as Hugh Ireton plied him with question after question.

"Are you quite sure, Arthur, that the Dons are taking up the matter; or is it a practical joke of Leslie's?"

"I am afraid there's no doubt about it," said his friend. "Holthsworth has certainly been closeted with the Provost —"

"That's a d—— ruffian," said Ireton furiously. "Believe me, he has some object behind this besides the interests of the Company."

"I can't say I'm sorry," said Ashley lazily. "It is the one thing and the only thing that can save Albrecht. If this won't do, I see nothing before him but Mountjoy."

"Yes, but what can Dons or Proctors or Provosts do?" cried Ireton. "There is no proof of anything against him, absolutely none. They may *caveat* him or pluck him — what does he care?"

"Well, Leslie says they are all running around with their gowns tucked under their arms, and looking as if the Papists had got Trinity at last. Why he told me that old Sol. did actually take two steps at a time going to the Provost's rooms yesterday."

"That's awful! The next thing will be the Chancel-

lor with a skipping rope. But you were saying, Arthur, something about Holthsworth. Do you really think he has his eye on Miriam — Miss Lucas?"

"Think? No, I'm sure of it. He has her property, why not herself?"

"That would be a tragedy. Have you discovered anything as yet?"

"No. I have searched and searched everywhere, and found nothing."

"But surely the property must be registered in some one's name?"

"'Tis registered now in Holthsworth's. He is legal owner until Miriam can claim."

"But, but — what are the conditions of the will? Are these ascertainable?"

"They should be, my friend; but in the labyrinths of the law, it is easy to hide one parchment."

Ireton was silent. He had no selfish motive in asking these questions, or in putting his friend, Ashley, on the track of Holthsworth. But he was deeply interested in this friendless girl, and he felt that some wrong had been done, or would be done to one so helpless under the power of one so unscrupulous and merciless as Holthsworth.

"Have you ever since broached the question of Miriam's parentage to Ian?"

"No! I doubt if he knows all, or if what he knows is more than conjecture."

"But I heard him say that his mother knew Miriam long ago; and she must therefore have known Miriam's mother!"

"But, my dear fellow, you should know that his mother is a Society woman of the strict Evangelical type. A hint that Ian was interested in Miss Lucas would lead to a bad breach between them. The proletariat and the Papist are banned there!"

"I wish we could get Albrecht out of this mess, and Miriam out of the hands of this rascal. Both appear to be about equally possible," said Ireton rising.

"And," he said, after a pause, "things are coming to a crisis both ways. That meeting the other night in the Artisans' hall seemed to bring things to a practical issue between the Directors and the men. And all Dublin is talking Holthsworth and Miriam."

"You may be quite sure, Ireton, that a marriage there is nearer than an explosion elsewhere. You see Holthsworth has a distinct object in dragging Miss Lucas from ball to ball, and parading her in Grafton Street. He'll send her name from mouth to mouth, and then —"

"Look here, Ashley," said Ireton, "I'll tell you what it is. That girl cares for Albrecht more than she thinks. Albrecht cares for her more than he thinks. We'll get them married, by Jove, and that will save both."

"Good old Don Quixote," said Ashley lazily. "See what that would mean, even supposing it could be done. Albrecht disinherited and disowned; Miss Lucas disinherited and penniless, unless," he said, after a rhetorical pause, "they could go down to that place with a savage name, and live on potatoes and fish."

"You have a lawyer's head and a lawyer's heart," cried Ireton, half angrily, although he admitted the justice of his friend's remark, and was not half sorry for it, "you see everything in such a — practical way. But 'tis a nasty affair. How the mischief did Albrecht ever get entangled in this nefarious business?"

"Bad and promiscuous reading," replied his friend. "When a fellow like Albrecht begins to read all this literary stuff — *Revolutions*, *Rights of Man*, *Religion of Humanity*, from Rousseau to Karl Marx, he must lose his head. His heart betrays him, and puts his reason and common-sense in pawn."

"I can't understand it!"

"Oh, 'tis intelligible enough. Nothing hits a young man's fancy so much as fine, rounded, rhetorical air-bubbles. He wants them all, and doesn't care into what quagmires or morasses they lead him. And, without doubt, Albrecht is now up to his neck in a shaking bog."

"You can see no means of escape. Scratch that lawyer's head of yours, Ashley, and strike on something!"

"Where's the use? There's no use in appealing to Albrecht's safety or self-interest. He would dismiss the idea in scorn. His honour is at stake. Poor devil! As if there were any such thing as honour nowadays. There's no use in appealing to Miss Lucas. You tell me she's as hot over the confounded matter as he is; and I suppose she, too, believes in the 'death before dishonour' business. There's no use in talking with these ruffians that are using him. What do they care, so long as he is in their toils, and they can use him? We might speak to his mother; but, candidly, that would look treasonable. Would it not?"

"Do you know what it is?" said Ireton, as if a brilliant idea had shone upon him. "I'll speak to Miss Lucas myself. Albrecht told her to place all her trust in me —"

"Generous fellow!" said Ashley smiling.

"I don't know if she takes that view herself," said Ireton. "But now 'tis Albrecht we want to save; and she alone can save him."

"But she won't!"

"I say she will. I have been reading somewhere, I suppose in some confounded novel, that a woman will sacrifice anything for the man she loves; and I tell you there's something more than childhood's friendship between Albrecht and Miss Lucas!"

"'Tis a plant of sudden growth then," said Ashley. "Their love is like the mango tree with the Hindoo jugglers. But go ahead and fail."

"Why should I fail?"

"Because you will. Do you think Albrecht would allow Miss Lucas to despise him?"

"I said persuade him to give up this folly."

"Yes! But let her succeed, what would come after, at least in Albrecht's imagination?"

"Love and happiness and peace!"

"No! Contempt, worse than death."

Ireton was silent. He did not quite understand his friend, but he felt that what he said was true. And then Albrecht's words came back with the force of a sudden revelation:

"You and I, Myrrha, could hardly drive the chariot of life in safety. We should court destruction."

Clearly there was nothing to do but wait and watch. But Ireton was sorely grieved for his friend. He began to think, as so many think when great crises in life are pending, that Death, merciful death, would be the only possible saviour. But he was deeply grieved for his friend. As for Miriam, she appeared to have passed out of his life for ever.

Strange to say, just at this very time, when the two friends were discussing Albrecht's affairs with a view to save him, there was closeted with the latter another pleader for his own safety, as involved in the safety of others. Father Hugo, who was made aware of all the secret forces at work to make a great strike inevitable, and who saw with dismay the men passing gradually away from his own saving influence, determined to make one bold move and challenge the chief instigator and organiser on his own floor. He knew perfectly well that Newton was supplying from the English war-chests the money; that Stenson, a sincere but half-mad enthusiast was inflaming the men's passions by his writings and speeches; that Greevy, though a subordinate, was doing great mischief by his influence gained by his unselfish character and his strong religious feelings; but he also knew that with all these forces against him, he could still keep the men in safe courses but for the tremendous influence of this young Trinity gentleman, whose position, as one of the dominant race and an alumnus of Trinity, seemed to add an overwhelming force to his earnest and powerful eloquence. It is always the characteristic of conquered races to seek a sanction from their masters. It palliates their defiance of law, and gives their revolt the one endorsement it requires. And Father Hugo felt

that if he could remove this one great and inspiring factor in the turbulent elements that were seething around him, they would soon separate and fall to pieces of themselves.

It was a strange and portentous event in the history of Trinity, when a serge-clad sandalled monk passed under its archway, and threw his shadow across the gravelled quadrangle. Students turned around, and stared after a figure, whose like had never before been seen within these walls; the porters felt seriously alarmed at their temerity in having allowed him to pass; a group gathered in College Green, wildly conjecturing what was the cause of so singular an apparition in such a stronghold of fierce and undiluted Protestantism. There was a legend in the college for many months after that the Professor, who was nicknamed "Old Sol," rushed wildly to the Provost's rooms, and asked breathlessly:

"Has the inevitable arrived?"

and it was even said that the great picture of the Virgin Queen was turned by some unseen hand with its face to the wall.

Father Hugo was happily a foreigner; and thought little of Irish *convenances*, and a good deal less of Irish criticism or opinion. He had an object before him, and he had to attain it. That was all. He found his way with some difficulty to Albrecht's rooms, and boldly knocked, and entered.

Ian Albrecht was sitting at a writing-desk, his head sunk low on his hands. All the fires of enthusiasm that burn so brightly and fiercely at eventide sink down to white ashes under the cold stare of a sunless wintry morning; and just then Albrecht was experiencing the dread depression of passionate natures, which alternate with periods of high exaltation. He was thinking that Death would not be altogether unacceptable. He raised his head as the inner door opened, and stared at the brown apparition, bareheaded, and barefooted that stood before him. His eyes were so dim that he could not catch the

outlines of the figure, and the face of the monk was but a pale yellow blur. Father Hugo advanced and said smilingly:

"Goot — mawnin'!"

"Good morning," said Albrecht, rising in bewilderment, "please, be seated."

"Dank you," said the monk. "You are ver' surprise to zee me?"

"Can I do anything for you?" said Albrecht courteously. "Oh, I presume," he continued, as if some vague idea of mendicancy were connected with the mediaeval figure, "you are collecting funds for some purpose. I cannot do very much, but —"

"No," said the monk, affecting great sternness in a moment. "I am goom on more important affairs. I goom to ask you give me back my little shildrens."

Albrecht looked astonished at the remark, and began to suspect queer things, but the friar went on, pointing his finger at the delinquent:

"You have stolen my leetle shildrens. You have taken them from me, dere fader, and you have handed dem over to de devil."

"I beg pardon," said Albrecht, quite courteously, "there is clearly some mistake here —"

"No, no, no," snapped the friar, "dere is no mistek. It is you, who have stolen away my leetle shildrens; it is you that have put tears in their mudders' and sistares' eyes, and in the hearts of their poor wives; it is you have tuk them away from God, and the Holy Virgin and Saint Josef; it is you who have dragged dem against their will into dangerous and sinful gourses. You air a bad man; you air a deevil! what care you, if they knock deree head against a stone wall, and get dere eyes black? what care you if dere wives and shildrens are starving? What care you, if the gendarmes plunge dem in gaol? Vhill you feed de leetle ones? Vhill you, me fines gentlemans, vhill you go down and say: 'Twas not dese poor fellows, it vhas I dat vhas to blame? Put de punishment upon me,

and permit dem to go? Oh, no, you vhill save your own skin, you vhill whistle 'Champagne Charlie'! and 'Not for Joe'! I knows you vhell. You are not Irish. You are continongtal! You do come from de cradle of anarchy and socialisme; and you bring dese deveelish ideas into Holy Ireland. But, mark you, you vhill fall; you vhill come to bad end. But you vhill drag my leetle shildrens with you!"

Albrecht was sorely puzzled what to say. He could not be angry; yet he had to make some defence. He thought for a moment and said:

"I do not think there is much use in arguing the question; we view it from different stand-points. You are trying to block modern progress with your literal and mediaeval Christianity; and we are trying to wean the people from you —"

"Dot is goot now!" interrupted Father Hugo, "dot is candeed! You do not say: No! my friends, we leave you your reeligion; we do not interfere with you, we are vhorking on different lines, an' all vhill be the same in the end. No, you are honest, you are candeed! You say, we vhill destroy your reeligion first, and then we vhill save you. Dot is goot! Now we understand each other. Go on!"

"You put it rather bluntly, Sir," said Ian, "but as you say, I have the merit of candour. To be very open with you, I consider your Church, with its eternal preachment on the vanity of life and the value of a future eternity, is the enemy of Humanity!"

"Den, you do not believe in God, or your soul?" said the monk aghast.

"What you call God, I call goodness — the moral law, the instinct of righteousness and duty, implanted in our natures —"

"By whom?" asked the monk.

"By reason and the sense of mutual protection, and the common welfare," said Albrecht.

"But why have not de brutes your descendants, no — your, what is it? ancestors, also de moral sense?"

"It came in the evolution of things," said Albrecht, evasively. "It is the common instinct now."

"And where does your instinct come in here?" asked the monk.

"In the protest against injustice," said Ian, rising up. "In the defence of natural rights, and the avenging of wrongs."

"And den?" said the monk.

"And then," replied Ian, "the raising up of the masses of the people to wealth, enlightenment, education, now the monopoly of the few."

"You pity de poor?" queried the monk.

"Yes," said Ian, with some emphasis. "I do not pity them. I bleed for them."

"I pity de reech!" said the monk blandly.

"What?" cried Albrecht.

"I pity de reech," continued the monk, "and if I were not poor myself, I would envy de poor. Yes, mein vriend," he continued, coming over and laying his hand on Albrecht's sleeve, "'tis de reech dot are to be pitied; and de sooner dot is reckonised, de better. I hafe seen all. I hafe sate under de gilded dome of de reech man and under de bare rafters of de poor. I hafe eaten *pâté de foie gras* and cold potatoes, drunk champagne out of silvare goblets and cold tea from a cracked mug; and I tells you, my dear young vriend, dat de dome often govers hell, and de rafters lean down on Heafen. Would you be honest Greevy or — Holthsworth? Goom now, tell me dat!"

"'Twon't do, my dear Sir," said Ian, getting a little worried at the monk's persistence. "The time for argument is over; the time for action has begun. All this has been thrashed out a hundred times; but our minds are now made up."

"Den you vhill force on de strike!" said Father Hugo.

"Certainly. Unless the Directors come to terms."

"And you know dot Engleesh money is behind it all?" said Father Hugo.

"There, Sir!" said Ian. "Please don't consider me uncivil, if I say that this interview, unsought by me, must now be terminated."

"It shall be as you wish," said Father Hugo, with sudden dignity. "But, mark you, mein vriend, it vhill end badly for you. 'If de blind lead de blind, shall not both fall into de ditch?' But I forgot, you do not believe in de Gospel of Christ!"

"Oh, yes, I do! He is with us. 'He hath pulled down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble.' I can cap text with text, as long as you care to quote."

Father Hugo looked him all over in amazement. He could not understand him. He bowed, and said:

"I bid you, goot—mawnin'!"

XVI

TWO INTERVIEWS

MIRIAM LUCAS was not so engrossed with her new friends in Dublin, and the exciting circumstances of her new life, as to forget old friends and old times in Glendaragh. It was not her nature to forget; nay, her memory was but too retentive of the pain that comes from slights and wrongs, and the deeper pain of remembered kindness. Often, when Holthsworth had gone to his office for the day, and she was free from his unwelcome attentions, she would allow her mind to wander over the past, and recall every feature of the well-beloved house and grounds, and fields and sands and sea, now consecrated in the light of memory. And she saw all things not in their gloomy and wintry aspect, shrouded in sea-mist or half blotted in sheets of rain, but as they looked in the early springtime when all things were springing into joyous life, or in the summer twilights, when the consecration of peace fell on hamlet and cliff and ocean; or in the gentle autumn, when the grey sadness of farewell was over all the face of nature. How little people thought, as they watched the pale, proud face of the girl in the splendid brougham that stopped before some fashionable shop in the public thoroughfares of Dublin, that her thoughts were with fishermen and a fool; and that she was dreaming, dreaming of a lowly life of simplicity and even poverty down there where the oak trees shook in the valley before the south-western gales.

And if she were tempted to forget, her dear old friends would not allow her. Once a week, regularly, Mrs. Crosthwaite wrote to the lonely girl, such cheery, kind, affectionate, epistles that they brightened almost half a

day; and now and again came a letter to Anstie, from her father or Declan Ahern, to assure her that all was bright and cheery down there on the wintry sands, and that the old man was as tenderly cared-for as if she, herself, were there. And Anstie showed all these precious documents to her young mistress; and they would talk together over old times and places. But a deeper impression would be forced on the mistress than on her maid; for Anstie was enraptured with city life and all its splendours, and — the young groom who kept Holthsworth's chestnut horses so sleek and silky, was really very attentive.

Then again there was trouble with the tenants on the Glendarragh property. They positively refused to pay their rents to anyone but Miss Miriam, whom they recognised as the owner, and the only owner of the estate. Threats of law in solicitor's letters, writs, and all the other coercive measures for extracting money from unwilling pockets were of no avail. And, strange to say, Holthsworth was unwilling to proceed further. He threatened all manner of revenges and reprisals, but did not execute them.

"The loss is yours," he said to Miriam, "these hinds are supercilious and insolent. They do not plead poverty. They simply say they won't pay me, as your poor father's representative. They say they will pay you. Have you given them (pardon the suggestion) any encouragement?"

"Not the least," answered Miriam.

"You know," Holthsworth continued, insinuatingly, "that would be all right, but irregular; most irregular, and even illegal. We do not know what complications might arise; and to hold receipts for rent in your name, who are not legally qualified to give them —"

"Is that so?" asked Miriam.

"Well, I presume so," said Holthsworth, shuffling. "Until you can assume control of the property it would be decidedly illegal to sign receipts."

"And when may I assume that control?" asked Miriam.

"We—el, that rests a good deal on—well, on circumstances; I was about to say on myself, but that would be rude. But there is a clause, my dear Miriam, to the effect that should you—it looks unkind to say it—but we lawyers must be blunt, you know—contract a marriage disapproved of, or, at least, against my wishes, you may sacrifice certain privileges."

"That's easily settled," said Miriam. "I have never allowed such a thought to enter my mind."

"I am so pleased to hear you say so," said Holthsworth, rubbing his soft palms together with an air of great satisfaction, like one who had escaped from a serious difficulty. "I am very pleased indeed to hear such a—such a—a loyal expression from your lips. It is a decided pleasure for me to know that you will not marry without my consent—"

"I beg pardon," said Miriam, flushing angrily, "I meant that I was not contemplating marriage at all."

"I know. But, of course, you understand, my dear Miriam, that that cannot be. You cannot remain a dependent for ever—"

"Am I a dependent now?" she said.

"I don't meant that. You quite misapprehend me. You are not left penniless by any means. But I mean that you must assume your proper sphere in society, sooner or later, as the wife of some eminent man, who can throw around your life all that would make it blessed and happy, and whose only solicitude would be to keep away all jarring and discordant circumstances—"

He could not speak more plainly; but she instinctively knew what he meant. She was silent; and this led the fool on to his fate.

"If, let us suppose, now," he said, with dry, whitened lips, "you were to get an offer of honourable marriage—mind, I say, honourable, from a professional man of good standing in the city, one, let us suppose, who is sought after as financial Director of Companies, and whose name is on every Board in the City, and who knows the ins

and outs of every commercial enterprise, and who, besides, would be devoted to you heart and soul, would you not think it well and advisable —”

Something in the girl's face stopped him. It was not disgust, nor aversion, nor surprise. It was the look that was on the same face that evil night, when he had pledged her health in that diningroom down by the sea, and the red wine trickled through her father's fingers; and without a word she had led the poor, helpless imbecile from the place.

The same sensation flashed through him that had led him to soliloquise and plot that night when left alone with his wine; but, in a moment, it flamed out into anger, aroused by the consciousness of his power.

“I know all now,” he said hoarsely, “I was but experimenting on your feelings, and you have given yourself away, Madame Miriam. And now hear me! You are in my power, soul and body. I hold the latter; the law gives it to me. I hold the former thus. You have been nesting with rebels and conspirators in the City — men sworn to the subversion of all law and order. It is not usual for ladies brought up as you are, to herd with that vile canaille. But,” he added, with bitter sarcasm, “perhaps you aspire to become an Irish Madame Roland, or perhaps a Charlotte Corday —”

“Stop!” said Miriam, “one moment. There is no necessity for that. The justice of the Eternal will pursue you and seize you.”

“Why do you name the ‘Eternal’,” he said, with cold bitterness. “Neither you nor your associates believe in God.”

“That is one of your calumnies,” she cried.

“Put it to the test,” he said. “The next time you meet your lover, either in the editorial sanctum, or at Rathmines, or the next time you write him with note-paper stamped with my initials, ask him, is it a part of the Socialistic creed to believe in God or eternity, and — await your answer.”

The girl was so utterly stunned by these unexpected revelations of her inmost thoughts and secrets, she could not speak. She felt herself more than ever in the power of this hateful man. Clearly, she had been watched and followed; and every imprudence had knit more closely the bonds in which he held her. She could not speak. She flung herself on a sofa, all her native dignity crushed and broken, and placing one hand over her eyes, she motioned him away; and because he refused to accept the gesture, she said, in a pitiful, pleading voice: —

“If you believe in God, go; leave me!”

He went away, and entering his sanctum he lit a cigar, and smoked in long, deep breaths.

“Yes, my Goethe,” he said at last to himself, “you are right. Doubt is only resolved by Action. I think that citadel is taken. Now, let me see,” he said, turning over some letters which lay on his table. “The men go on strike this evening. Good! Doubt always resolved by Action! That clears the decks. ‘Albrecht will be expelled from Trinity the moment the Senate can formulate’ — damn their formalities — as if there were not enough proof against him to send him to Mountjoy. ‘Father Hugo all day at the works, begging, praying. The men turned their backs on him.’ Quite right. A lesson to these intermeddling priests to mind their own business which they are not at all disposed to do. ‘Greevy has sworn’ — what? Oh, yes! I’ll keep out of the fellow’s way until he is under lock and key. Now let me see the little programme working itself out unto the end.”

He laid the letters side by side and took up a pencil and collated them. He then drew a little map on a blank leaf, marking down detail after detail, until the whole thing looked perfect. Then, he rubbed out one or two items and substituted others. When all seemed perfect, he touched the bell. A servant appeared.

“When Mr. Elliott calls, show him up immediately,” he said.

He sat and smoked in silence for a long time. He had

sunk into a kind of reverie, in which he was dreaming of a blissful future, in which Miriam would be the central figure. Suddenly, the door opened and Miriam appeared.

"I am leaving Dublin immediately," she said. There was a trace of the old hauteur in her attitude and voice.

"On a brief visit?" he said, raising his eyebrows.

"No, for ever," she replied.

"You are not," he said. "You stay in Dublin until — certain events occur in the near future which will clear matters for you. When your *Watchman* is suspended; and your young Trinity friend, with his associates, is clapped into gaol, or shot, you may have no further business here. Then, we shall consider your future."

"Mr. Elliott is waiting, Sir," said a maid-servant. "Shall I show him into the drawingroom?"

"No, show him up here," he said, waving a hand to Miriam to withdraw. Elliott entered. He had not waited to be shown up. He was already on the landing. He closed the door of Holthsworth's study carefully, and took the proffered chair. But a few times he looked around at the door, to be sure that no spirit had entered with him.

"Well?" said Holthsworth, sharply.

"The whole thing is working smoothly," said the man, laying his hat on the floor, and taking out a bundle of papers. "Newton has been spending money like water, and the few who were holding out with Father Hugo have been outvoiced by the others. Stenson, too, has been pouring petroleum on the fire. He is honest, and in deadly earnest. And Greevy —"

The man stopped.

"And Greevy?" said Holthsworth.

"Well, the report is abroad that Greevy has gone insane. At least he talks like a madman. I think, Sir —"

The man stopped again.

"I think you ought to be careful. One never knows what these half-insane men might do."

"True, very true," said Holthsworth, as if converted to an opinion he had been doubtful about. "I'll watch Greevy, and have him watched."

"Another thing, Sir," said the man, "if I may mention a lady's name?"

"By all means," said Holthsworth. "But respectfully, Elliott, respectfully, as becomes ladies."

"I was going to say, Sir, that it would be well if Miss Lucas was allowed to go on, that is, that you should not dissuade her from encouraging the men."

"How? I don't understand!" said Holthsworth.

"You see, Sir, if they think they have a lady with them, it will drive them on. And they think, already, that Miss Lucas is not only a lady but a kind of prisoner of yours whom you have got into your toils —"

"Go on! go on!" said Holthsworth, delighted.

"And if they think they are doing a fine thing for a lady, as well as for themselves —"

"I see! I see!" said Holthsworth. "The damned Don Quixotes!"

"That's it, Sir," said the man, chuckling. "If they think there's a distressed lady in the case, they will go through fire and water for her."

"Good!" said Holthsworth. "That's an ingenious idea. I see what you mean. Those who won't make fools of themselves for Newton's money will make madmen of themselves for my ward."

"That's it, Sir," said Elliott.

"But we must take care, Elliott, that she suffers no harm. I would not wish for the world she should be compromised, or even her name mentioned in such a connection."

"Of course, Sir," said Elliott, "I know what you mean. It would never do, considering Miss Lucas's future and all that is before her and you to have her name connected with a strike."

"Certainly. You understand me perfectly, Elliott. You are a good fellow. You'll have a glass of wine?"

He touched the bell, and Anstie appeared, a little too quickly, he thought. He looked sternly at the girl, and gave a quick, stern order.

"I beg your pardon," said Elliott, humbly. "Is that Miss Lucas's maid?"

"It is," said Holthsworth, surprised.

"Is her name Carroll? Anastasia Carroll?" said Elliott, consulting some papers.

"It is. We call her Anstie," said Holthsworth.

"I think, but I am not sure, that she was listening at the door."

"You are quite wrong, Elliott," said Holthsworth, frowning. "No servant here would dare do such a thing. You have all the suspicions of your profession."

"Yes, I suppose I have," said Elliott, humbly.

"I shouldn't have said it. But you are fumbling with some papers apparently in connection with the subject," said Holthsworth, with some anxiety.

"Oh, no; not at all," said Elliott, simply. "It is of no consequence. I was deceived, of course; I was deceived. Here's to your health, Sir. May you live long."

Next day Anstie, to her great surprise, was summarily dismissed with a month's wages and her fare back to Glendarragh. A few days later the young groom gave notice; and, one by one, the old familiar faces seemed to disappear from around Miriam, and she began to feel how utterly alone and desolate she was. Yet, her strong nature upheld her in the midst of her loneliness. She met Holthsworth that day at dinner, and on subsequent days, as if nothing had occurred. He was as tranquilly polite as if Miriam had accepted his overtures. He was playing a part, where he felt he should eventually succeed, and then —? Miriam felt that she was the centre of a problem that had to be solved. Her mother's history, her own position, their property and its ownership — here were questions that demanded solution. Yes! patience was necessary on both sides. And on hers also

was a thirst for revenge on the evil man — a thirst that promised to be satisfied; for were not all the hostile agencies in the City converging towards him?

Sometimes her woman's heart failed her as she thought what a serious struggle was this in which she, a mere girl, was engaged with this strong, wealthy, unscrupulous man. Sometimes she thought of Albrecht, with a certain tenderness and misgiving about his fate. What if she were instrumental towards his ruin? Sometimes she felt that she would go down in the struggle. She had not quite cunning enough to meet this man on his own ground. She felt that she could do a great thing, or make a great sacrifice, if it were only once and for ever. But the daily, hourly struggle against a force that seemed insensible, so secret were Holthsworth's methods, so tortuous his way; so cruel he was, and so kind; so despotic, yet so tender, appeared to her to be above her strength. And then the misgiving would seize on her imagination that she had plunged headlong into a wrong and desperate course of action, where she was contravening all laws, and defying all the forces that were ranked on the side of decency and order. Once, or twice, so great became her desperation, that she thought it were better to give in at once, and succumb to Holthsworth's wishes. But the idea of a life spent with this man filled her with such utter loathing, that she dismissed the thought at once. Anything, anything, but that.

After such temptations she always felt stronger and more enthusiastic. Yes! to live for a great cause; with the hope of seeing her way finally out of the great entanglement; at best, to die for such a cause, and reach the end of her despair — surely, this is best. After such trials her step became more firm and buoyant. Her eyes took on a new radiance. Alone and desperate! Be it so, then! If victory, so much the greater! If defeat, so little lost. Yes, forward, forward at any cost.

XVII

MOTHER AND SON

IF Ian Albrecht were asked what exactly had given his mind such a curious trend, that he should give up the studies of his profession and break with all the traditions of his class, as he had done, he would probably be at a loss for an answer. Or, perhaps, after a few moments' useless reflection, he would have sighed, and answered tritely: —

“There's a Divinity doth shape our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

It is quite true he had been not only dabbling, but plunging deeply in dangerous literature. He had been a disciple of Jean Jacques, had passed on to Saint Simon and Proudhon, had grown moderate, then extreme; then moderate again; and all the time he was the quiet, gentlemanly, modest student, taking no part in athletics, or the amusements of fashion, going to church regularly, and apparently cut out by nature to be a model clergyman, or to adopt some such quiet profession as that of a Banker, or a Broker. That revolutionary ideas — ideas of breaking up and reconstructing — and sympathies with the vast, toiling masses, were seething beneath those brown curls, and behind those brown, dim eyes, no one could conjecture. The revelation came as a surprise to his two intimate friends, as we have seen; and no idea could be further from the imagination of his mother, the one being to whom he was passionately attached on earth, and whose sorrow, when the revelation would come, was now the dread anticipation that made him sometimes morose and sad; and yet had not the least effect in cooling

his enthusiasm in what he believed to be a sacred cause. For now, too, Ian felt that thrill of pride — shall we call it noble? — that runs through every vein and nerve when a young man knows he is an acknowledged leader of men, that eyes are upturned to him for inspiration, and hearts are beating for his call.

Earlier in life his ambition had taken another turn. He had dreamed of being the star, the "bright particular star" of his own intellectual firmament. He had read with kindling eyes of the career of that greatest of Trinity men, William Rowan Hamilton, Fellow of Trinity, and Mathematical Professor at nineteen; at the age of twenty-seven, the leading light of his University. He had heard of that dramatic scene when, at the dinner-table, during the Session of the British Association in Dublin, and in the presence of two hundred of the most distinguished men in Europe, the young Professor was called out by the Lord Lieutenant, and solemnly knighted in recognition of his transcendent abilities. And he burned with the passion of a noble emulation for such, the greatest triumphs of the human mind. Sometimes, too, he dreamed of rivalling the great intellects of Germany, and of going down to posterity after a life of concentrated study and a death surrounded with all the pomp of a royal departure, as the founder of a great school of philosophy, or, at least, as the author of one immortal book.

But these dreams were soon dissipated. The idols of the school were no longer worshipped; but the idols of the market-place. No great question disturbed the base tranquillity of the schools. Everything was traditional and stereotyped and fixed. The ideas of the world, instead of being fluid and fresh, were fossils in adamant. Enthusiasm had died out. The art of oratory was dead. No man now, in bar or pulpit, would dream of reviving, or emulating, the rhetoric that had made certain names immortal, and built these bronze statues there in the Green. And as for the students, if Plato rose from the

dead, they would not throng his lecture-hall, or Academe; nor spend sixpence to buy a torch to carry the remains of the great thinker to his grave. In a word, Ian saw that all great causes had been, and were to the new generation, lost causes. There was but one that would yet touch the human heart; and alas! it was the cause of the proletariat, and the motive was — gain! ! !

He huddled away that base word and thought, and cloaked it with fine-sounding phrases. No, it was not gain! It was the up-lifting, the resurrection of the great toiling, sweating masses of humanity. It was the levelling up of the race to one great normal standard of perfection. It was the struggling and swelling and sweeping onward of the irresistible tide of social evolution. It was the voice of almighty nature, bidding him come and aid the mother of men in her beneficent task of rounding and perfecting humanity. There was no such thing as disobeying that call. It came to him by night and day, pleading, threatening, promising. It seemed as if the waters had lifted up their voices in a mighty tumult, and that the deluge was at hand.

Did he count the cost? He did. With face buried in his hands, he went over the details of all he should have to suffer and endure — the social ostracism, the probable expulsion from his University, the estrangement from his fellow-students and friends — above all, the violent rupture of the sweet and happy relations with his beloved mother. He was gifted with an imagination that saw all these things in detail, and in all their concrete horrors, and then — he coughed a little, and took out his handkerchief. Only one little life, fast running to its end. "Let it go out," he said, "in the splendours of a great death for a great cause."

Did he think of Miriam?

Yes! Not, however, in any human sense, but as a spirit linked with his in a sphere of thought and action far removed from ordinary life. The idea of a home, of domestic felicity, of the sweet surroundings of a life

blessed by the companionship of a kindred spirit, never occurred to him. He put these Elysian dreams, which haunt the minds of most young men, aside as not worthy, or not congruous to his circumstances and surroundings. Miriam and he, old playmates, had now been brought together again by the mysterious hand of Destiny; and both were linked together for ever and evermore in the sympathy of union of ideas, and a common sacrifice for a great and holy end.

And yet, sometimes, his courage failed him, when he thought of her. Was he right to drag her into the conflict, to ask her to perish with him? In the solitude of his chamber, he said 'Yes!' He was then only in the presence of an idea. In her presence, he said 'No!' He was face to face with a girl, not a woman, whom he couldn't ask to share his sacrifice. No! life was nothing to him. To her, it was opening up fair, and sweet, and sunny. How could he drag down over that fair face the curtain, whose shadows were already glooming and darkening his own life?

For some time, in his weekly visit to his mother, he had noticed a little restraint, a keeping back of something, which is a hint that confidence had been rudely shaken.

Mrs. Albrecht lived at this time in one of those villas at Sutton, that face the sea on one side, and are almost washed by the sea on the other. The position gave a curious colouring to her thoughts, which were deeply imbued with religion. She belonged to the sect called Plymouth Brethren; and had been brought up in strict Puritanical ideas which, notwithstanding wifehood and motherhood, seemed to narrow and harden as the years advanced, and the snows gathered on her forehead. She had met, and been married to an Austrian colonel, who, in his turn, was a member of that strange religious body called Herrnhutters, around whom so much legend has been written, and so much mystery has hung. It was the sympathy of religion had brought them together — the link of psalm and song and prayer, of holy Sabbaths, consecrated by

prayer, and rigid, stern morals, governed by fear, and the dreamy forecast of a "new heaven and a new earth" if not realisable here below, at least to be seen and experienced in the revelation of the holy book. Colonel Albrecht was shot down at Sadowa, just as he had ordered a charge of his hussars; and his widow, and her only child had come back to the Dublin of her childhood. Here, on a slight pension, eked out with small means of her own, she led a secluded life, mixing little in society, except amongst the chosen. And here she elected to die, leaving her epitaph written, ending with the symbolical words: —

"BETWEEN TWO SEAS!"

This Sunday evening, when Ian was announced for his weekly visit, she sat watching the twilight coming down softly over the sea. Her Bible lay open before her at *Revelations*. Her white, thin hand rested on the open page, but her eyes were watching through the sinking gloom a world of clouds and imagery, of ceilings of jasper and chalcedony, and floors over which were gliding the sanctified spirits of the elect. She was so absorbed in her ecstasy that she heard, as if in a dream, the words "Mr. Albrecht," and for some time, was but dimly conscious of the presence of her son.

He came over to where she was sitting abstracted; and his dim eyes failing to observe her ecstasy, he stooped gently and kissed her forehead. Then she turned and said: —

"It is you. I had been dreaming!"

The tremendous contrast between his wild, daring, tumultuous fancies, the desperate business in which he was engaged, and the sanguinary end to which he thought he was hastening; and the sweet seclusion of this seaside villa, and the heavenly peace that seemed to reign in that room, and to surround that beloved form as with the nimbus of a saint, smote his conscience, and he sank into a chair opposite his mother with a certain consciousness of guilt.

She said, without looking towards him:—

“I sometimes wish that we had duly authorised teachers—I mean,” she added hastily, “not authorised of men, but of God, who would expound His Word in wisdom.”

“I understood,” he said, without looking up, “that the Spirit spoke where He listed.”

There was a slight accent of sarcasm in his words, but his mother did not perceive it.

“True,” she said. “But sometimes human wisdom, holpen by the Spirit, may be quicker to discern the occult things that lie here. Now, here is a passage that giveth me much vexation and travail of spirit.” And she read:—

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. But if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth not out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and kill them and overcome them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where, also our Lord was crucified.”

“Now,” she continued, holding her hands open on the Book, “I can see part of the meaning, but the rest is obscure. The beast is clearly Romanism—the beast of *Revelations*; and the olive trees and candlesticks are clearly the symbols of Religion and Society. But I cannot see how Jerusalem, the City of God, can be called Sodom and Egypt? Can you throw any light on the text, Ian?”

“No, mother,” he said. “But may we not defer it, and have some tea? I want to speak to you of something else.”

She looked surprised, but touched the gong, and ordered the little servant, Rachel, to get some tea.

Meanwhile, the shadows were deepening, and a more than Sabbath silence reigned outside, where the dark waters were heaving. A deeper silence seemed to hold the inmates of the glooming parlour, for neither Albrecht nor his mother spoke.

When the tea came in, and the mother had in silence handed some to Ian, he said:—

“Mother?”

She said, “Yes.”

“I want to speak to you tonight about an oldtime story that has recently come back to me. Do you remember a little girl, a child, fair-haired and sunny, that used to be a playmate of mine, long, very long ago?”

“Her name?” said the mother.

“Miriam, Myrrha, Mir—we had a hundred pet names for her; and she was, you may remember, the sun of our lives.”

“There is but One, to whom that word can apply,” said his mother; “He Who is the Sun of Eternal Righteousness.”

“I know! I know,” said Ian, impatiently, “But you remember Myrrha—Miriam Lucas?”

“Well,” said the mother, emphatically. “I have reason.”

“I have seen her,” said Ian. “She has come up from the country and is in the city.”

“Alone?”

“No! Better she were! She is under the tutelage, or guardianship of a creature named Holthsworth.”

“Ian!” said his mother, in a tone of alarm and reproof.

“Yes, mother!”

“You should not speak thus. I know Mr. Holthsworth, and have known him for years as a godly man. Beware how you speak of the elect! What doth the scripture say: ‘Touch not mine anointed!’ ‘He who touches you, touches the apple of mine eye!’”

“I meant nothing,” said Ian, disingenuously. “But, mother, for old times’ sake, could you not bring Miriam hither? Surely she was better under your protection?”

"You know not what you are saying, my son," she replied. "Here are secrets which must not be touched."

"Yes, yes, I understand," he cried, impatiently, "there is some birth-taint, some secret; but that has nought to do with so sweet and innocent a girl. Why visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, and make one generation responsible for another?"

"It is the law," she said. "We may not alter it. But, if this child of evil has a chance of regeneration, by which I mean a new birth unto Christ, then Mr. Holthsworth is the one man, possessed of the Spirit, who may succeed."

"Poor Myrrha! Little Myrrha! Don't you remember, mother, how you used to pet her and caress her, and say she should always live here; and that Myrrha and I —"

He suddenly stopped.

"Yes," said his mother, after a pause, and in the same level, even monotone, passionless, unemotional, "I remember all. But then came the revelation! I forbade the girl this house; and the prohibition remains. And," she continued, slowly, "if you value your mother's love, which has never failed you, you also will leave that girl to be dealt with, with judgment and — mercy!"

"You seem to imply that Myrrha — who seems to me as pure as a snowdrop, and as innocent as when we played here around the sands together is, as you say, a child of sin?"

"Undoubtedly," said the mother. "She was born in sin, and remains a child of sin!"

"Perhaps so. I don't understand. 'Tis beyond me — the meaning" — he was going to say, "of sects," but he added, "of religious schools. Myrrha — a child of sin! Then who is sinless?"

"No one except by the righteousness of the Lord. Doth not the prophet say that all our righteousness is as filthy rags?"

"Yes! But there seems some deeper meaning in your application of the words to Myrrha, mother? How is this pure and beautiful girl a child of sin?"

"Dost thou not know?" she answered.

"I neither know, nor believe it," he said.

"Then know that this girl was born of a Papist and baptised in the Roman faith."

"Miriam, a Catholic — a Papist?" he exclaimed.

"You are mistaken, surely, dear mother. Myrrha — a Papist!"

"Yes! Search no deeper, my son."

"Then she is sublimely unconscious of the fact herself," said Ian. "To my knowledge, she has no defined faith, except in the sublime teachings of humanity."

"Do you remember, my son, that I once said to you, that no earthly power should sever us two, except by our own will; and that no will on our part shall sever us, except it deal with two things?"

"I remember," he said.

"Well, I repeat it. Companionship with the godless, the uprooters of social order, and companionship with the Papists, the destroyers of religion — this alone can create a gulf between us — a gulf," she added, in a low voice, "which, if once made, shall never be bridged or filled."

There was a meaning in the words which Ian did not fail to comprehend. She knew a great deal — perhaps she knew all.

Ian arose, and went over to where in the darkness the figure and face of a soldier shone out from a dark panel in the wall.

"My father died for a great cause," he muttered rather than said. "Would that I could die like him in the moment of glory!"

"It is not given to you to be like unto him," his mother replied. "'Tis yours to walk the ways of peace, and to go out blessed by all men."

"A thousand thanks for the word," he cried eagerly. "And when I shall go out with the blessings of the poor and the lowly, and all men in my ears, may I hope to have my mother's blessing too?"

"Certainly!" she said.

"May I have it now?" he cried, kneeling suddenly at her feet.

She hesitated, divining some meaning in the words and attitude which she could only dimly conjecture.

"Ian," she said, at length, "stand up! You mean something more than our ordinary parting tonight. What is it?"

"This," he said, without rising from his knees. "My life is running rapidly to its close. I feel I am going to rejoin that spirit, my sister, whom I never saw. I can pass down through the slow processes of decay to dissolution, each hour cutting away some vital force until all is spent. Or, I can go out in one glorious act, of word or deed, or suffering. This is my choice. To die as father died, in one brief pang of pain, but for a great cause, and in the hour of victory. This is my choice. How it shall be I know not. But, far or near, something awaits me, I care not, if it be noble and sublime. Can you refuse your blessing now?"

Agitated by his words, not knowing what to think or believe, distrustful of his motives, yet touched and moved by his appeal, his mother stood for a long time silent, her hand still resting on the Book, and her lips moving in prayer. He lifted up his face, and said:—

"Mother, it is growing late. Bless me ere I go!"

And she laid her hands on his head, and then ran them through the thick brown curls, as she was wont to do when he was still a child, and raising her eyes to Heaven, she blessed him; and then, when he had gone, she sobbed out her heart in silence.

XVIII

FROM THE GLEN OF THE OAKS

WHILST these little events were transpiring in Dublin, Life and Time, the great Twin-Brothers, were moving swiftly and silently forward down in the hollow valleys near the sea. Each grey or gloomy day came out of the night, grew to its noontide, declined to its grave; and the human figures seemed to be stagnant and motionless beneath it, so quiet, so uneventful, so silent were their lives. The great sea swung in and out in calm, rhythmical motion, or in fierce autumnal or winter passion. The fishermen put out their nets in a lazy way, careless whether they caught their finny treasures or not; or they sat smoking near their log-fires all day, only venturing out now and then to scan the sky on stormy days, and then return to the ingle-nook with the observation:—" 'Tis dirty weather, no sign of clearing down there in the west." Or perhaps, a silent trans-Atlantic steamer loomed suddenly up out of mist or fog or sheeted rain, and steered slowly by, homeward, or outward bound, black hulk or buff funnel shrouded in veils of mist; and an old salt would say:

"The Cunarder is gone in. She'll have a dirty passage across if the weather doesn't lighten."

Down at the rectory, too, the days went by in that silent, peaceful manner that were their wont in such a tranquil place. John Crosthwaite spent half his day in his little study, reading his Tillotson or Taylor, or some Church Journal, that gravely disturbed his equanimity, and brought an anxious look into his eyes by sundry hints and observations about German hermeneutics, and such terrible portents as the "Essays and Reviews" on the

one hand, and secession to Rome on the other. Looking out with dim reverent eyes from his seclusion (so deep from a social standpoint that he saw no one but the humble servitors around him; so deep from an intellectual point of view that he saw nothing but the stars and his Bible), he was troubled at the gradual, but certain upheaval that he saw was going on in the restless world outside; and his gentle spirit was almost wroth at the eternal restlessness and perverse curiosity of these human mites who, instead of fixing their thoughts, like himself, on the Eternal Stars, and the Eternal Word, went poking into all kinds of dusty and secret recesses to dim the splendours of the one, and challenge the truth of the other.

"If they would only let their old stones and codices and palimpsests alone," he would mutter to himself, "and take their telescopes and watch the Wheel of the Universe, we would have more holy, and more learned men."

Alas! how could the simple vicar know that there was never yet a fool who wouldn't dethrone the Almighty in defence of his own vanity.

The vicar's good wife also had her minor troubles. These arose from her very excess of good-nature. She utterly abominated] anything like pride, or exclusiveness, or class-distinctions; and railed fiercely at these traditional vices in the circle where, by right of birth and her husband's profession, she moved. And, on the other hand, she lived in a state of chronic impatience with the people around her, because they did not come up to her level. If a child were sick, if a cow died, if a labourer got hurt at a quarry, or at the harvest threshings, she was the first to be present, arguing, compassionating, scolding, rebuking, helping; and all the time, not only tolerated, but loved, because the people knew it was all for them, and that "her heart was in the right place."

But these were only incidents in a smooth, tranquil life that, cut away from the distractions of cities, moved along in its calm, uniform peace towards eternity; and it

would be difficult to find on this planet, perhaps, a quieter and more peaceable existence than that of the good vicar and his wife, although their congregation was certainly limited, and the vast majority of the population were of a different faith.

But just now a little incident, apparently insignificant, was ruffling the peace of the vicarage. It was the return of Anstie Carroll from Dublin.

That young lady was good enough to tell the villagers that her visit was but a swallow-flight — a mere dip down from higher latitudes, until she was ready to wing her flight to that Paradise of good Irish — New York. She came amongst the village folks an apparition of splendour, which, although it was tinselled and meretricious, had yet its own effect on their simple imaginations; and she affected a metropolitan accent, which was a curious and unpleasant amalgam of southern brogue, Dublin slang, and the notes of high society. Some one had the courage to ask her whether she had come back to remain. She tossed her little head, and said grandly, with an anticipation of her future: —

“I gue—ess not!”

Declan Ahern hung around her, as a faithful dog would follow and watch his master's face. She was kind, compassionate. That was all.

She visited the rectory. Mrs. Crosthwaite had sent for her. She utterly disliked the girl, her vanity, her frivolity; but she wanted to know all that could be known about Miriam.

Anstie, under her cold, clear glance, was modesty itself. Mrs. Crosthwaite had no great faith either in her modesty or her truthfulness.

“You have come back from Dublin?” she asked.

“Yes'm!” said Anstie.

“Left your situation?”

“Yes'm!”

“You're not returning, then?”

“No'm!”

"What do you propose doing?"

"I'm goin' to America, 'm!"

"Oh! And hadn't you a better place in Dublin than you can ever expect in America?"

"I want to better meself, 'm!"

"Of course! Of course!" said Mrs. Crosthwaite musingly; but reading the face of the girl all over with her eyes.

"You had no other reason for leaving, then?"

Anstie hung down her head. This cross-examination was becoming unpleasant. This sharp, shrewd woman seemed to know all about that young groom, and Anstie's appointment to meet him in Queenstown, and her further engagement to be married to him the moment they landed in New York.

She drew the end of her parasol through the outlines of the carpet on the floor.

"How is your young mistress?"

It was a happy question. It gave Anstie the loophole of escape. She became instantly voluble.

"She's very well, Ma'am. That is, in health, Ma'am. But she's not happy, Ma'am. Indeed she isn't. She has her carriage and horses, and fine dresses, and a drawing-room like the Queen's. And she can go to the theayter whenever she likes, and to the opera, and to flower-shows. An' she has everything she can wish for in this world. But she's not happy, Ma'am. Indeed, she isn't. Many and many a time she says to me, 'Ah! Anstie, if we were only back in Glendarragh once more!'"

"But, surely," said her inquisitor, "if she has all you say, and if Mr. Holthsworth is so generous and kind —"

"That's it, Ma'am! That's the whole thing. She knows what he wants. And she hates him, she hates him as the Devil hates holy water, begging your pardon, Ma'am, because you are a Protestant—and she'll drown herself, Ma'am, before she ever consents to marry that—that hyanna!"

"I see," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, "I see. But has Miss

Lucas no friends, no ladies who would come to her, and help her in her difficulties?"

"Oh, law, no, Ma'am. He keeps 'em away. There's an ould woman, or lady, in Dublin, who's living on *his* charity; and she sees *her*. An' there's an ould juenna in the house, and she sees *her*. An' whiniver she goes out, the ould juenna goes with her, and takes her and brings her home, until Miss Miriam doesn't want to be going out at all; but sits all day in her room, readin' and writin'."

"I see," said Mrs. Crosthwaite. "And now, Anstie, wouldn't it have been nice of you to remain with your young mistress in her great trouble? She'd like to have some kind, friendly face about her."

"Indeed'n 'twould, Ma'am," said the girl, weeping, for she did love her mistress, even with her shallow heart, "and I would never leave Miss Miriam, Ma'am, but there's quare things goin' on, Ma'am; an' 'tis a quare place entirely —"

She stopped suddenly short.

"What queer things? Why is it a queer place?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite.

"Well, you know, Ma'am, 'tisin't right or fit, or proper for a girl to be talkin' about the place she have left," said Anstie, with a proud sense of superior virtue.

"I know, I know," said the vicar's wife, impatiently. "But you are aware that Miss Lucas has no one in the world to look to but my husband and myself. And, from what you say, this is a matter of life and death."

"Indeed'n it is, Ma'am," answered Anstie, now encouraged to full confidence, and with all her scruples quelled. "Of course, you won't mention my name, Ma'am, but I fear that Miss Lucas has got in amongst a bad set —"

"I know, I know," said the vicar's wife, impatiently. "I have no doubt about it, nor about your description of her guardian; but, so long as Miss Lucas does not want to become Mrs. Holthsworth, no power on earth can compel her."

Anstie opened her eyes widely, and then went on:—

“It isn’t that alone, Ma’am, although that is bad enough. But Miss Lucas has some gentleman friends, Ma’am; and I don’t think they are all right —”

“What do you mean, girl?” said the vicar’s wife, flushing angrily.

“Oh, I don’t mean nothin’, Ma’am,” said Anstie, “only that there’s near bein’ bad work in Dublin, Ma’am, in the way of strikes and murder, an’ Miss Miriam is in the middle of it.”

“Miss Miriam in the midst of strikes and murder!” echoed Mrs. Crosthwaite. “I am afraid, my poor girl, your wits are gone astray.”

Anstie smiled in a superior way, as one who was sure of her position.

“Indeed’n they’re not, Ma’am,” she answered. “Unless I am mistaken, Miss Miriam is in the thick of a big conspiracy of the workingmen of Dublin; an’ you’ll hear bad work one of these days.”

“Have you any proof of what you’re saying, girl?” said Mrs. Crosthwaite. “Or is it only servants’ gossip?”

“’Tis that too, Ma’am,” said Anstie. “But some young gentleman from Trinity College is very great with Miss Miriam; and he’s the head of the conspiracy; and Miss Miriam does be writing to some paper every week; and,” the girl dropped her voice suddenly, and said in a whisper, “they that knows says, that when the men break out, Mr. Holthsworth will be the first to suffer.”

Then the letter from Miriam, and the cutting from the paper flashed suddenly across Mrs. Crosthwaite’s memory, and seemed to confirm the girl’s curious tale.

“This is serious,” she almost whispered to herself. “Good God! who’d ever think of such a thing for Miriam? I think I see it all now. But, tell me, what is this young gentleman’s name?”

“Albrecht, Ma’am,” said Anstie. “Ian Albrecht. I ought to know it, because I have spelled it on Miss Miriam’s letters; an’ ’tis a quare name. And they say,

Ma'am, that his mother knows he's intimate with Miss Miriam; and that she knew Miss Miriam's mother long ago; and that there's a story about her; an' that Mrs. Albrecht has taken her Bible oath that if he ever marries Miss Miriam, she'll never give him a penny, and she is rotten with money."

"I see," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, as a good many lights began to dawn on her, "but tell me, how does Mr. Holthsworth regard all this? Is he not interested in Miss Lucas? And does he know his life is in danger?"

"Oh, he knows all, Ma'am," answered Anstie, "for he's as cute as a fox; and the men say in the kitchen that he's playin' a deep game. And, sure, if he weren't as clever as the Ould Boy himself, he has a fellow coming to him every day to prime him with news. And what we think, Ma'am, is this, that he's laving the thing go on till 'tis ripe; and then —"

"Well, then?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite, noticing the girl's hesitation.

"Then, Ma'am," said Anstie, "he'll swoop down on them like an eagle; an' he'll get the men shot by the police, and Mr. Albrecht hanged, and then — he'll have Miss Miriam all to himself."

Mrs. Crosthwaite now was silent with grief, and sorrow and anxiety. Making all allowance for Anstie's exaggeration and probable falsehoods, she concluded that there might be some grave truth hidden behind the girl's story. She remembered now having heard Miriam speak of a Mrs. Albrecht and her little boy, Ian, the former a great friend of her father's, the latter her own playmate. She also remembered the mystery that hung around the history of Edwin Lucas and his wife; the subtle suspicion that seemed to haunt society everywhere that there had been some *mesalliance* or family stain on the memory of the latter. She also remembered Miriam's deep and intense feelings about her own ostracism; and how easily that innate antagonism to society, which seemed to have been born with her, might easily, under

her new circumstances, have been fanned into a flame. Then, that newspaper, and those bitter articles — Yes! the whole thing was clear.

"Anstie," she said, making her voice very gentle, "you should have remained with your young mistress at any cost. It is only under great trial we know and need our friends. You should have stayed in Dublin, and kept me and Mr. Crosthwaite acquainted with all these things, so that we could help Miss Lucas. She is now alone and unprotected."

Anstie wept again. She saw clearly that her young mistress was in danger, and felt for her. The truth had to be told.

"Indeed and indeed, Ma'am," she said, sobbing, "I would never leave Miss Miriam, indeed I wouldn't, but I couldn't help it. I knew that that man hated me like poison, because I was the only Catholic in the house, begging your pardon, Ma'am, but some people — not you, nor the parson, nor Miss Lucas — but other people don't like us; and the girls used to be at me about my religion, and wanting me to eat meat on Fridays, and saying that I if gev a shilling to the priest he would forgive me, no matter what I done. And I had an awful life there, but I clung on to Miss Miriam, and we used be talkin' of ould times, and Glendarragh, an' you, Ma'am, an' the parson. But I knew all along, Ma'am, that that man wanted to get me away out of the house, so that Miss Miriam would be alone, and have nobody but spies and informers about her. An' then, one day that other fellow, Oylett, was with him — he was a detective, Ma'am; an' I happened to be at the door, an' I wasn't listening, Ma'am, indeed I wasn't. But I suppose he thought I was. Because the very next day he called me in, gave me a month's wages, and dismissed me without a line of charakther."

"I see, I see," said the vicar's wife. "Are you leaving soon? I have heard that you have a notion of America?"

"I am, Ma'am," said Anstie. "Me passage is paid; an' I'm only waiting to hear from the ship."

"Well, I may want to see you again. The matter now looks serious. By the way, did you ever tell Miss Lucas about Mr. Holthsworth's plans to draw her into his toils?"

"What plans, Ma'am?" said Anstie.

"What you have already told me. His plans to get these people into trouble, so that he might carry out his nefarious ideas!"

"Well, no, Ma'am. Because you see 'twas only servants' gossip; and Miss Miriam would never pretend to me anything about her own goings-on; and, you know, Ma'am, you could not speak to Miss Miriam always. She might think I was taking too great a liberty."

"Yes, yes, quite so. 'The bird is in the fowler's net.' We must extricate her, but it is no easy task. You must help us, Anstie!"

"I'm sure I will do everything I can, Ma'am, for Miss Miriam. But—I must go when I hear from the ship."

"Of course, of course," said the vicar's wife.

XIX

THE GREAT STRIKE

YES! Father Hugo was defeated. His "littell shildrens" were snatched from his hands; his Confraternity of the Holy Family was practically broken up, for although a few of the workmen, who professed themselves enlightened enough to distinguish between the priest and religion, still frequented the Church, the vast body, honestly believing themselves to be rebels, were too much terrified or ashamed to attend. Perhaps, too, they feared his eloquence, which though broken and rugged, had always behind it the magic element of sincerity and truth.

For a few days after the strike had commenced at the Railway Works, he had kept closely to his cell. He felt the smart of his defeat keenly. *His* Confraternity was the premier Confraternity of the City; *his* meetings were always crowded ones; *his* processions were always City attractions; *his* congregational singing was the talk of City and Country. And now — they had turned their backs on him, at the voice of socialist agents, and under the spell of eloquence of a young Protestant, or Agnostic, from Trinity College. It was maddening. For hours he would walk up and down his cell, his fingers caught in the rude white rope of his girdle, thinking, thinking, how it would all end, and how his defeat could be retrieved. But he had more than a mere personal interest in the matter. It would be an injustice to withhold the fact that higher motives swayed him. Deep down in his priestly heart he felt for his flock. He saw how they and their families would suffer — the long, weary, idle days for the men; the temptations of the taverns, where they would be compelled to meet, and talk rabid

nonsense; the anxiety of the women, who would miss the weekly wage, and miss it, more and more, as time went by, and credit was refused, and article after article went to the pawnshop; the hungry children kept from school and learning the evil arts of vagrancy on the streets; the abstention from Mass and sacraments on the plea of want of decent clothes — he saw it all, and it touched him deeply, and his passionate heart moaned aloud. Then, how would it terminate? The men would never yield; but as weeks went by, they would become maddened with misery and want; and then — street-processions, fierce harangues, passions let loose, and the Hell that follows. But worst of all, the good priest felt that this was the first, and alas! successful essay on Irish soil of the great, terrible propaganda of Socialism. He knew what it meant. He had seen it in Germany, and Belgium, and America. He had seen how its terrible, specious doctrines bore fruit; and how, commencing with the religion of Humanity, it ended in the dethronement of God, the sundering of families, the breaking up of all social ties, and all the other evils incident to revolution. He was maddened, moody, depressed. He bore in silence the remarks of his confrères, who though they realised the gravity of the situation, and felt deeply the mortification of Father Hugo, could not refrain from being amused at his vehemence and depression.

“I wash my hands with soap out of the whole business,” he declared. “I will have no more to say to them. Let them follow their leaders now, and see what they will get. Father Hugo turns his back on them.”

But when pale, tear-faced women came into the little, bare parlour of the convent to plead with him to intervene, and tore from their bosoms the heap of blue pawn-tickets, and told him of all their misery and pain, his heart bled for them; and his quick, mercurial disposition, accentuated by zeal and love, drove him from the peace of his cell back into the battle-field again.

He saw very soon how utterly hopeless it was to induce

the men to come back to work. Pride alone would prevent them. But, behind that powerful motive there were tremendous agencies that would not brook interference, much less yield to it. Greevy, on whom all his hopes were placed, seemed to have completely lost himself. He was possessed by a homicidal mania towards Holthsworth; and in indulging it, he cast away all religious feeling and scruple. Stenson was a fanatic, who would strongly resent priestly interference. Newton was a hidden agent and unapproachable.

"There's nothing for it," said Father Hugo, "but to beard the lion in his den."

Once his mind was made up about the prudence or justice of an action, Father Hugo felt no misgiving. He left everything then to God. So he set out for Rathmines one of those bitter winter mornings, the cold slush of the pavement pools dashing on his bare feet, or pumped at every step out of his loose sandals. He reached the suburb about twelve o'clock; and made his way, by a few inquiries to Holthsworth's house. The great, modern mansion lay back from the road, and was approached by a winding avenue that ran under some trees, and was bordered by shrubs up to the door. The lodgewoman stared a little at so strange a figure in such an unaccustomed place; but was wise enough to make no remark.

As Father Hugo mounted the steps, he saw a young gentleman with his hand on the door-bell. He knew it could not be Holthsworth, whose appearance was familiar to him. But he said in his own cheery way:—

"Goot-mawnin'."

Ireton at once jumped to the conclusion that this was the same figure that had disturbed Trinity some weeks before, and of whose lively interview with Albrecht, the latter had given a vivid description. Swiftly, he ran to the conclusion:

"Here is an ally that is not to be despised."

"Good morning," he said graciously; and, as the servant opened the door, he said to the latter:—

"Mr. Holthsworth not at home?"

"No, sir!" said the maid.

The monk's face fell.

"Perhaps I could see Miss Lucas?" said Ireton, not at all disappointed.

The name at once struck on the monk's imagination. Here lived the unknown and terrible figure, whose burning words had sent all his "littell shildrens" towards the abyss.

"It is Providence," he said to himself. "The man I sought is not here. I will face this dreadful woman, and try to bring her to reason. The lioness cannot be worse than the lion."

He stepped humbly into the great hall, and folding his hands in his great brown sleeves, he looked down on the marble floor, which he had stained with his dirty sandals.

The maid, a young Protestant girl, approached the strange figure with some apprehension. She did not know what to make of it. If Ireton had not been there, she would have screamed for help; but his presence gave her courage.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "you have made some mistake."

"No, my shild," he said, "I have not. Go tell your young mistress that Father Hugo wants to zee her on biziness. She vhill understand."

The girl looked at Ireton as if for a clue. He said:

"If you allow me to wait," he gave her a card, "perhaps Miss Lucas would see this gentleman first?"

"You are ver' kind. I am ver' much obliged."

The maid ushered Ireton into the drawing-room; and went upstairs to see her young mistress.

In a few minutes, Miriam came slowly down the broad, carpeted staircase. Whatever description her maid had given of this unusual visitor, she was hardly prepared for the reality. She had heard, of course, of Father Hugo, the monk, who was thwarting every effort of hers towards

the uplifting and amelioration of the masses of the people; but she had figured to her mind but a vague, shadowy outline of a Catholic priest, such as the village pastor of Glendarragh. The figure, rigid as a statue, the humble, bowed head, the rough brown frieze, the bare feet, the uncouth sandals, and the little pool of water that had dripped from his wet habit and feet, gave her a little shock of surprise, and, strange to say, remorse. For the first time it dawned on her, that perhaps all her actions hitherto, had been wrong, all her energies misapplied. But, the moment he lifted his bowed head, and flashed his eyes suddenly upon her, she recollected herself, and said apologetically:—

“My maid has made a mistake, Father, she should have shown you into the dining-room. Would you please come?”

On his part, Father Hugo was equally mystified. He had associated in his mind with the Fury who had written those flaming articles in the *Watchman*, a picture of some great Madame Roland, or else some hard-featured, middle-aged, soured woman, who was wreaking vengeance against Society for personal disappointment. He saw before him a gentle, beautiful girl, who needed only a veil to become a picture of the Madonna.

Before he took the proffered chair, he said:

“There is some mistek! I wished to see Mees Lucas!”

“I am Miss Lucas,” she said simply.

“But,” he said, with dilated eyes, “you are very young and bootiful!”

Miriam smiled at the simplicity.

“I am sorry we are in different camps, Father Hugo,” she said. “We both love the poor, but our ways of serving them are different.”

Father Hugo was grievously puzzled. He had laid down his plan of “campagne,” as he called it; he had determined to talk plainly to this Virago, as he had deemed her; but lo! this was something he had never expected. He did not know how to proceed.

"I can conjecture the object of your visit," said Miriam, seeing his embarrassment, "but you know things have gone too far now. One sharp struggle, and the rights of the workingmen are safe for ever."

"The rights of the vorking men?" he asked. "What rights?"

"The right to shortened hours, higher wages, a decent standard of living," she replied.

"Shortened hours for idleness, and loafing; higher wages for drink; and a decent standard of living — tell me, Mees Lucas, can any man eat more than three meals a day?"

"I suppose it would be enough," she said.

"Can any man wear more than one suit of clothes at a time?" he continued.

"Hardly," she replied. "I dare say it would be inconvenient."

"Then what more does man want?" said the monk. "And what more do the reech possess?"

"You have touched the point," she said. "All men are born equal. The rich have no rights which the poor should not equally possess."

"Is that your doctreen?" said the monk. "All men-are-born-equal?"

"I mean should be born equal," she replied. "I would have no one branded by poverty, or sin, or heredity, or shame. Let each soul work out its own salvation, and be alone responsible."

"You are fighting against facts, Mees," said the monk. "You are a dreamer, a fanatic. You have no reason."

"It is because I have reason, and what is more, experience on my side, that I have taken this strange part for a woman," said Miriam, now somewhat excited. "You are a priest; and there are no secrets from you. Now, mark me! You say I am young and beautiful; you probably think that life is all sweetness to me; that every day is too short for my happiness, and night too long because it keeps me from the day. Can you believe me when

I tell you, that I never lay my head on my pillow, but with a hope, and a prayer to the Invisible, that I might never wake again; and that I never open my eyes at the dawn, but with a shudder at the thought of my martyrdom. Yet, what have I done? I have never injured a human being. I have been kind to the poor and suffering; and, until I came hither, I had at least the guerdon of their great love. Yet, one fearful shadow is over all my life. What it is, I know not. I only know it is there; and men shun me for it; and women treat me as a leper. If I go into a drawing-room, the people gather into a corner, and leave me alone. If I go into any kind of society, I am an 'outcast' and a leper. I seem to carry around me an atmosphere of sin and contagion. Yet, I am not conscious of any crime, nay, of any disqualification. And what is it all? Some secret connected with my mother that I cannot discover or unravel, some hidden sin that has come down upon me, and makes all men shun me. Did I say all? No, I should say rather only what is called society. The poor have never shunned or loathed me. And hence have I proclaimed, even I, with my feeble girl-voice, war against that evil thing, and the righteous doctrine that no soul should suffer, or be made to suffer, except for its own sins."

Miriam Lucas, cold as a statue in Society, enveloping herself in all secrecy and mystery, laid bare her soul to the poor monk. She felt that here was no need of caution; that here was naught but sympathy. And she felt a certain kind of relief in thus disburdening herself to a fellow-being. Hence, as she gasped out this strange confession, broken and tortured by the pain and the relief, she assumed a kind of sad humility to the eyes of the monk, and he only interrupted the pleading avowal by murmuring softly to himself, whilst the tears stood in his eyes:

"Mon pauvre enfant! mon pauvre enfant!"

When she had finished, he said quietly, his hands still folded in his broad sleeves:

"You did say something about being a 'leper and an outcast' in society?"

"Yes!" she replied. "A pariah, a moral *crétin*, bearing the burden of another's sins!"

"Where did you find these vvhords?" he asked, fixing his eyes upon her. "They are not your own."

"No!" she said. "But they are familiar. Yes, I remember. I think I must have heard them from the dear old vicar at — home!"

"Do you remember of whom they vvhore spoken," he asked, "or the remainder of the quotation?"

"No, I cannot say that I do. I went seldom to Church, that too was a piece of social hypocrisy. Because the evil thing sanctioned it, I repudiated it."

"Would you allow me repeat the rest?" he queried.

"Certainly," Miriam replied. "But I cannot see to what purpose."

"It was of the leper and the outcast it was written," he said. "Lisden!" And he quoted the sublime prophecy:

"Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; and we have thought him as a leper, and as one struck by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises, we were healed. All we like sheep had gone astray, every one hath turned into his own way; and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was his own will; and he opened not his mouth. He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearers, and he shall not open his mouth.'"

The monk paused.

"Do you know of whom these vvhords were spoken?"

"Yes," said Miriam, "at least I suspect they were written of the man called Christ."

"The God called Christ," corrected the monk. "And now, Mees Lucas, can you see what a noble lot is yours, but you are protesting against it?"

Miriam was silent.

"You are one of that great band," continued the monk, "who are shosen to bear the zins of others, and to zave others by mutely atoning for their faults. Of course, you can rebel against the call to such heroism; but then, you come down to the level of ordinary people, and she, whom you might otherwise save —"

"She?" interrupted Miriam. "Of whom do you speak?"

"Of your mother," calmly replied the monk. "You have spoken of some secret zin of hers. You are expiating that zin, and saving her. Do you not understand?"

Miriam stared the priest all over. Then, as in an involuntary gesture, he pushed out one bare foot, still soiled and grimy from the muck of the streets, and at the same time, pulled out from his deep sleeve a wretched cotton check handkerchief, and mopped his forehead with it. Something in the abject poverty of his appearance struck the girl's imagination, and she said:

"And for whose sins are you making expiation, Father?"

"For the zins of Society," he said. "I and all the poor of Christ are seeking to make atonement for the holocaust of zin that zteams up and ever up, before the throne of God. Do you think from all you know, and have experienced, that God's hand could be stayed, except for some segret power that wards it off? Vhell, that power is the cry of the orphan, the tear of the widow, the zwear of the ztrong man, the pains of the zick, mutely and patiently borne."

"Then, you have no pity for the poor?" she almost cried.

"'Tis the reech I pity," he said.

"But," she said in an agony of doubt and disbelief, "there must be some secret consolation, some faith, some hope, that makes such sacrifice tolerable?"

"Tolerable? No. Joyful and acceptable," said the monk.

"I am bewildered by your words," Miriam said, deeply

touched in spite of herself. "There is a secret somewhere. I cannot understand. I will think over your words, Father. Have you any notes or book or letter that may remind me of them?"

He loosed his cincture a little, and taking out a black ebony cross, with a bronze figure of the Crucified, he placed it gently in her hands.

"I will keep it," she said, "safely for you; and I will return it —"

"Only when you have learned its lesson," he said, bowing and leaving the room.

XX

SOCIETY

WHILST Ireton in the drawing-room awaited the close of Miriam's interview with Father Hugo, he had time for reflection. And after he had turned over the leaves of a book of prints, one or two albums, and a few illustrated art-books, and studied the few old oil paintings that hung upon the walls, and revolved in his mind what he should say to Miriam, and how he would put it, and whether he would persevere, or consent to be promptly and immediately discomfited, the thought suddenly struck him — what a contravention of all social laws and customs it was for him to be there, visiting a young lady alone, and without the slightest reference to her guardian. And swiftly on the heels of this thought came a number of rapid questions: what right had he to be there? Why should he break through the laws of society in this case? Would he dare to do so in the case of any other young lady with whom he was much better acquainted than with Miriam? Why should Miriam Lucas be an exception? Would she not have a right to resent it? And, supposing that her guardian were just then to enter, and find him there, would it not present Miriam in a false light to his mind; and would not Holthsworth be perfectly justified in taking him, and throwing him, neck and crop, down the stone stairs, and out into the public road?

They were unpleasant suggestions; but only one of them had much weight with this young man, who had studied the theory of probabilities, and calculated that so far as his own personal safety was concerned, he was indifferent. But he was keenly alive to the fact that in treating Miss Lucas in a manner quite different from that in

which he would treat any other young lady of his acquaintance, he was not only violating the laws of society, but was, unintentionally of course, yet by strict inference, acting disrespectfully towards her. The thought was gall and wormwood to him, because he was so deeply interested in her (how much he did not know); and the terrific suspicion glanced across his mind that he and his comrades, out of esteem for Albrecht, and with the most honourable intentions towards both, were gravely compromising this young and defenceless girl, who apparently knew nothing of the terrible reprisals society makes for the slightest breach of its rules and traditions. And at the same time the thought recurred, that Miss Lucas had always seemed to regard his own presence and intervention as an intrusion; and his acquaintance as a disagreeable necessity. He anathematised his own impatience and generous impulsiveness, which was always dragging him into disagreeable situations; and he was looking at his watch with the hope that the delay might excuse a precipitate flight, when he saw the brown monk shuffling down the steps, heard a brief colloquy in the hall, and the next moment was face to face with Miriam.

Her pale face was quite unflushed. No emotion, however great, seemed to be able to call up the blood to that white, impassive countenance. But her eyes were dilated and shining, and they seemed to look above and beyond Ireton. And her lips were slightly parted, as if in mute interrogation as to the object of his visit. She held still in her hands the black ebony crucifix with the brass figure of the Crucified, which Father Hugo had given her; and it seemed to add to the mystery and wonder that, to Ireton's eyes, always surrounded her as with a halo of light.

The young man bowed deeply. She motioned him to a chair, and sat down holding the crucifix in her lap. She did not hold out her hand, or otherwise salute him. It depressed him, as he remembered how cordial was her greeting of Albrecht, when last he saw her; but he

held fast his emotions, although he could not hide his embarrassment.

"I hardly know how to commence, Miss Lucas," he said, twirling his hat around and with eyes fixed on the carpet, "how to explain my visit, which, I know, is unconventional; but Ashley and I are becoming very uncomfortable about Albrecht; and we decided that I should call and ask your advice."

He stopped. Miriam said quietly:

"Mr. Albrecht is not ill?"

"No, not exactly that," stammered Ireton. "Of course he is always ill, that is, not healthy. He has weak lungs, as you know, and a strong predisposition to phthisis. In fact, my own opinion is, that he has warded it off by the exercise of public speaking; but then, the excitement is killing him."

"Why cannot you and your friend, then, induce him to give it up?" she said.

"We wish we could," said Ireton simply. "And we are more concerned about other matters than his health. There's his reputation. The College authorities have got hold of the fact that he is a Socialist leader; and, besides their natural hatred of such a person, they feel the character of Trinity compromised. And when these old fogies get hold of an idea, like that, they'll stop at nothing. You see," said Ireton, philosophically, "it is only when men persuade themselves that they're responsible for a great principle or a great institution, that they bring out the rack and the gibbet."

"You think then that Trinity stands for tyranny and injustice?"

"For conservatism and law," answered Ireton.

"Exactly. That is, for lies that are stereotyped, and wrongs that are impune?"

"I am only stating facts," he said apologetically. "I am not defending the action of the authorities. I am only trying to save our common friend."

"From what?" she asked abruptly.

"From what?" he asked in surprise. "From punishment, from disgrace, from expulsion, from ruin."

"These are vain words," she replied. "There is no meaning behind them."

"But you don't understand, Miss Lucas," he replied, amazed at her coldness and hardness. "If Albrecht is expelled from Trinity, as he may be, it means the ruin of all his life's prospects — his professional ruin, and ostracism from his own class in society for evermore."

Miriam's eyes flashed out at this, but she said:

"Go on. I am following you!"

"Of course," Ireton resumed, "you don't you're too young and too inexperienced to understand all this, but it is a matter of life or death to us —"

He suddenly stopped; and flushed crimson with shame and remorse. The recollection of all he had seen and heard of Miriam Lucas suddenly flashed up across his stupid commonplaces. He was dumb with shame and sorrow. He thought, too, that Miriam's face took on a pale tinge of colour. There was an awkward silence, and then he stammered:

"But these are trifles. The great thing is, that it will mean a bad break between Albrecht and his mother."

"You say then," said Miriam, with cruel persistence, "that ostracism from society — to be blamed and shunned by his own class — not to be admitted, on any terms, amongst them — I think I can imagine it," she said musingly, "fine ladies, as in Byron's case, drawing up their silken skirts lest they should touch the ground contaminated by his tread. Is all that nothing?"

"No," said Ireton, boldly. "I only spoke comparatively. It is a great deal; it is a terrible trial; and you alone can save Albrecht from it."

"Let me see," she said coldly, quite unheeding his appeal, "I am puzzled about many things. As you say, Mr. Ireton, I am inexperienced. I want you to clear up one or two things for me."

"With pleasure," he said, "if I am able."

He said in spirit, "Hang her, she is a Lamia"; but he could not take his eyes from her face. She went on, holding the crucifix still in her lap.

"If I understand aright," she said, "Mr. Albrecht has thrown in his lot with the poor working classes to elevate them, to emancipate them. He is an idealist, and this means eccentricity; but it is a noble idea, is it not?"

"Well, yes!" said Ireton reluctantly.

"It is a beautiful, human, nay, Divine Idea. And what makes it still more beautiful, it demands sacrifice. Has not that sacrificial idea always haunted humanity with its nobleness?"

"Yes, yes, I believe so!" he murmured.

"There! We are agreed!" said Miriam. "All great souls are called upon to make sacrifices. It is only the little souls, which the gods disdain to regard."

Ireton could only stare.

"But, then, the sacrifice must be for a noble and honourable cause," she continued.

"Quite so, quite so," said Ireton hopefully.

"To sacrifice oneself for a paltry cause, would be madness; for an ignoble cause, a crime."

"I quite agree with you, Miss Lucas," murmured Ireton.

"The whole question therefore is, whether the cause to which Mr. Albrecht is devoting his life is a worthless, or unworthy cause. What do you think?"

Thus challenged, Ireton did not know what to say. He shuffled around, smiled inanely, and said at length:

"I cannot consider any cause worthless, or unworthy to which Miss Lucas and Ian Albrecht are devoting their lives."

"Very pretty," said Miriam. "You agree, therefore, with me in thinking that the cause of the poor and down-trodden is a noble cause to espouse. I am pleased to find, Mr. Ireton, that you, too, are a convert to the theories of Socialism."

"Oh, no, no," said Ireton, hurriedly, the dread word

echoing in his conscience, "I am far from that. I don't want the fabric of society broken up. I'm for legitimate agitation. Society must be preserved and protected. Society must be maintained —"

"And by Society you mean the idle, wealthy, indolent class, 'who labour not, neither do they spin,' and who don't like the pillows to be taken from under their elbows."

Ireton wished himself back in Trinity. "What a fool I was," he thought, "to come here!" He grew desperate.

"Well, I see, Miss Lucas, that my mission is a failure. Ashley and I counted on your influence to save Ian from himself. I suppose there is no help now. We must let him run his course. It means the gaol, if not worse."

"Mr. Albrecht will know how to control himself," said Miriam.

"Yes," said Ireton, rising to leave, "but can he control others? It is easy to set the stone rolling down the mountain side, but who is to check its ruinous career? You don't know the Dublin workingman."

"Why cannot their priests control them?" said Miriam. "Are they not omnipotent in Ireland?"

"Exactly. But where they have failed, who can hope to succeed? That monk who has left the house was the only man in Dublin who held the reins on the necks of these madmen, and he has failed to hold them now."

"His theories are not yours," she said. "He says that the people have no case at all. That the rich are to be pitied, not the poor. And that some chosen souls must take up the burden of the world's iniquities and bear them. I can't quite grasp his meaning as yet. But it seems nobler than yours. You say the people have a great cause; but they must not fight, and no one may succour them at the risk of personal expense of life or means."

"I'm not competent to judge," said Ireton, irritated at her cold, logical manner. "I have not studied the question. I am a medical student. I keep aloof from politics, which I detest. I came here to ask you to save

Albrecht. I thought you had some interest in him, having known him from childhood. I have been mistaken. I am very sorry for having intruded."

"It is no intrusion. You have done your best for your friend, and —" she added, casting down her eyes — "mine. Yes, *mine*," she said, with emphasis. "I have no secrets. Ian Albrecht was my earliest playmate. We romped together in those far off, happy days, when there was no shadow of suspicion; and people appeared to be more kind and gentle than now. We have met again, and the old friendship has been renewed. But, were he fifty times as dear to me as he is, I would not dishonour our friendship by saying to him: 'Go back, and purchase peace with dishonour!'"

"Then my unhappy mission is at an end," he said. "What is to be, will be, I suppose."

He passed out from her sight, thinking that whatever friendship might exist between these two, there was no love. No woman, who really loved a man, would sacrifice him thus. Was he annoyed, and disappointed? No. He walked down that avenue with a singularly light step, spoke to the old lodge-keeper with great cheerfulness, and friendliness, boarded the tram-car with a light, elastic leap. He tried to read; but could not. The paper was a blurred mass of unmeaning type before his eyes.

"She's a Lamia," he said to himself, "not a being of flesh and blood at all. Holthsworth will marry her; and then one day she'll turn herself into a snake, bite him, and disappear. I'm glad for Ian's sake."

XXI

TEMPTED

DURING these eventful days, to all outer seeming, Holthsworth went about as unconcerned about the events that were agitating the whole City as if they were happening in Japan or China, or as if he had no more interest in them than the newsboys, who called out each evening the events of the day. He had so many commercial interests that this of the Great Railway, of which he was the Chief Director, seemed but one and insignificant; and the strike that was the talk of Ireland seemed but an "incident" in his great and respectable career. He stopped in Sackville Street, and chatted gaily to friends whilst the eyes of groups of angry and half-starved men glowered at him from the steps of Nelson's Pillar or the corners of the by-streets. He called the newsboys, and bought the *Evening Telegraph* or *Echo*, stopped and read it, and smiled, whilst detectives watched him anxiously, and hoped that he would take his cab or tram and hurry out of their district. He visited his Club in Kildare Street, chatted with his fellow-clubmen, and then hastened on to one office after another in the City, always ending the day's work at the Railway Terminus. Sometimes, a deputation might be waiting for him, of gentlemen interested in one branch or another of business that had been brought to a deadlock by the strike. He received them courteously, explained that he was but one director, and could only express his own opinion; but he was quite sure that the Directors were most anxious to settle matters, if the men were reasonable, etc. — The deputation were bowed out. Some said he was most reasonable and courteous, and clearly meant well, if only

these demagogues would let the people alone. Others said that he wanted to crush the thing out in fire and blood. One, who had been reading a little, said he had the teeth and nails of Carker. The others said, 'Exactly' or "Just so."

Mr. Holthsworth gave himself a holiday from business on Thursdays. He thought it was due to him as a gentle mental relaxation; and his medical adviser thought so too, said something about a bent bow, and too much mental irritation, and ordered rest. Holthsworth made Thursday his Sabbath, because on Sundays he was deeply engrossed in religious and theological matters, had to attend two services, at one of which he always was called upon to address the "brethren"; and then there were meetings and conferences and consultations, at each of which he, a "burning and shining light," had to illuminate the darker horizons of less favoured co-religionists.

So Thursday was his Sabbath, and on Thursdays he spent the morning lounging in his deep armchair and reading; and after luncheon he ordered his carriage and drove around the suburbs, but always through the City. Miriam was his invariable companion. She hated the loathsome parade, and, after a time, hated it more, because she knew it was part of the programme mapped out by her wily guardian to show her how completely she was in his power. Once or twice she rebelled, pleading headache, etc. But he was inexorable. "The air would dissipate the headache," "The drive was just what she wanted," "He would order the coachman to go just where she pleased"—and so, with one single female companion, an aged female cousin of Holthsworth's, Miriam had to bear being paraded along Dame Street, through Grafton Street, under the windows of the clubs, beneath the balconies of hotels; and everywhere she was stared at as the future happy bride of that happy and most prosperous man. And, on such occasions, Holthsworth lavished on her all that princely munificence could offer. The carriage stopped at the bookstores, and she was

invited to go in and order every new thing, no matter how costly, that she could desire. It stopped before the fashionable outfitters, or milliner's, whose windows were draped with great long tapestries of silks or poplins, woven in the most expensive looms of France. It stopped at the jeweller's, and the obsequious bald-head showed them all that the artificers' science could effect in silver and gold and stones. It stopped at great Banks, and Mammon-mania, where Holthsworth entered alone, and left Miriam to study the ragged proletariat shuffling by; and everywhere the great man was regarded as a god, and those gaping through the windows thought that he had found a Juno worthy of him.

And yet, unknown to Miriam, unknown to Holthsworth, but feebly suspected by him, other eyes besides those of the servitors of Mammon and fashion, were watching both. Men at street corners nudged one another and looked towards the carriage where the fair girl sat. Sometimes two ragged mechanics, in Sunday clothes, much the worse for the wear, would pass by, and respectfully raise their felt hats to the astonishment of Miriam's companion, to her own unconsciousness, because on such occasions she wrapped herself in a kind of stupor or dream, and seemed to be looking away into far distances, until the report went abroad amongst Holthsworth's fashionable friends that Miriam was idiotic, and she was spoken of at five o'clock tea-tables as the "beautiful idiot" whom Holthsworth was about to wed. But gradually her face and figure became known to the working classes of the City; and it was understood that the girl, this child of fortune, this aristocrat, did actually break through the horrid crust of caste and position to sympathise with them. Strange stories began to get afloat about her origin. She was the child of a working-man, who had been adopted by Holthsworth through some whim about her beauty. She was a foundling, left at his door one winter's morning, and since then reared in some Home or Institution. She was a Bird's

Nest child, trapped and inveigled from her wretched mother, who had sacrificed her soul for gold. She was a foreigner whose father had died in prison, because he had written some terrible things against his Government. Only in a few breasts was the real secret held, but all these rumours tended to create in the hearts of the workers a sympathy and love for this beautiful girl, of which she was utterly unconscious. Then, at one meeting of the strikers, it was hinted that she was a lady of fortune, and a Catholic, whose person and property had been, by some legal subterfuge, seized by Holthsworth, who used his ill-gotten power as a lever by which he hoped to turn the affections of the girl towards him; and then — the Revolution had its heroine, and what more did it need? And it had also a motive, now, more chivalrous than mere wage-hunting. It was no longer a merely mercenary movement. There was an element of romance in it; and many who had wavered, or been lukewarm before, began to feel that here, at last, was a motive, genuine and honourable. How to emancipate Miriam, how to establish her rights, what far bearing the strike had upon her liberty and happiness, but dimly dawned upon their rude intelligences. They only felt that by striking at Holthsworth they would serve her, and the mighty cause with which they were identified at once. And, in striking at Holthsworth they meant no physical violence. They only thought that by perseverance they would somehow break his influence and possibly cripple his resources, and then —

There was one man, however, whose fingers itched to get hold of Holthsworth's person, to crush him in a vice of blood. That was Greevy. All along, through the strike, this man, formerly deeply religious and punctilious about his duties, seemed to be developing into a madman. The thought of his child, driven to ruin by this smooth-faced scoundrel, became an obsession. All day long it haunted him. All night he lay awake, dreaming of revenge, and sank into sleep only to dream of

revenge, and its retribution. Sometimes, under the fervent pleadings of Father Hugo, he would start back from the abyss into which he was plunging; go to Confession, and make cast-iron resolutions that he would imitate the "Man of Sorrows," and forgive, even as he hoped to be forgiven. But then, a word, a look, a line in a newspaper instantly woke up the fierce though slumbering fires of passion, and the man went about with the dogged determination to get even with Holthsworth, and to taste the sweet justice of revenge.

One night, wet and stormy, Stenson and Greevy walked home together from the meeting of the strikers. Both were downcast and depressed. The men were losing courage. The airy and proud defiance of the first few weeks had evaporated. Hunger was beginning to pinch the little ones. Credit was being stopped here and there. The Sunday clothes worn by the men were gradually becoming ragged. Blacklegs had been imported from Scotland and England, and were working with impunity here and there along the line. Clearly, victory was inclining towards the masters. Defeat, and such defeat, was hovering above the men.

"If this goes on, Greevy," said Stenson, "it's all up. The men are becoming chicken-hearted."

"So they are, so they are!" said Greevy. "Six weeks' hunger would damp anyone's courage."

"They're not hungry, damn them," said Stenson. "They have plenty of food still."

"But how?" said Greevy. "By pawning all they have down to their wives' petticoats and their children's frocks. And them as has got credit will pay damned well for it!"

"Well, then, hadn't they better give in?" said Stenson. "They had no right to enter on the fight unless they could carry it out to the bitter end."

"That's all right for you, Sir," said Greevy, reproaching Stenson, yet maintaining his respect. "You're alone. You have no wife to look hopeless at you when you come

back from doin' nothin'; an' no childher to drive you clane mad with their hunger."

"That's true!" said Stenson. "But everyone knew he would be called upon to make a sacrifice in a great cause. They didn't enter on the fight blindfolded."

"No; but they were tould it would be a short one," said Greevy. "The min didn't know the lingth of the Directors' purses. They were tould that in a mont', in six weeks, the bosses would give in."

"And so they would," said Stenson, angrily, knowing that he himself had been guilty of the unconscious deceit, "but for that scoundrel, Holthsworth. 'Tis he that's stiffening the backs of the others. I know that more than half the Board would have made terms with the men but for him."

The two men walked on in silence. There was a deep meaning in Stenson's words which he dared not explain more fully. And Greevy understood that there was a silent appeal to himself beneath the words.

"You had an old grudge against Holthsworth, Greevy," said Stenson, at length, "but I am glad for your sake, and all our sakes, that you have forgotten it."

Greevy was still silent.

"It is a good and Christian thing to forgive," continued his tempter, "even though he wronged you as man was never wronged before you. Because a man may be wronged out of his wages, and out of his place, and he could bear it. But it was only one like yourself could bear the wrong where it strikes deepest."

Greevy's face was kindling, but he only said:

"You're shpakin' almost the very words of Father Hugo himself, Mr. Stenson. Forgive as you hope to be forgiven."

"Exactly," said Stenson. "And the virtue is all the greater, when as in your case, it touches your honour most deeply. Men don't mind the loss of a few pounds, or a miserable situation, nor even a blow struck in anger. But, when it comes to be pointed out as a coward, who

would not put himself in danger to avenge a frightful wrong —”

“Who said I was a coward?” exclaimed the artisan, turning fiercely on his companion.

“Not I, not I,” said Stenson, meekly. “I know you to be a brave man. But people will talk. And, you know when the black blot of shame comes down on a family, and people shake their heads, and say: ‘He can never lift his head again,’ it is not like anything else, that may be forgiven and forgotten.”

“That’s throe, too,” said Greevy. “And now you’re shpakin’ as the devil does be shpakin’ to me from time to time.”

“God forbid!” said Stenson, starting back at the allusion. “I’m saying nothing to you but for your good. I only say that when a man can forget his child’s dishonour, he can forget anything. But let us change the subject. One thing now is certain. The men won’t hold out much longer. On the other hand if they give in, they’ll be spurned like dogs. I can imagine Holthsworth laughing and showing his white teeth, when the last plank is struck from beneath the men’s feet, and they are at his mercy.”

“That hasn’t come a-yet,” said Greevy, “and with God’s help, it may never come.”

“Well, we’re near enough to it,” said Stenson. “And then, when he has crushed us under his heel, I suppose he’ll force that magnificent girl to marry him.”

“Miss Lucas?” asked Greevy.

“Yes. She’s in his power, you’re in his power, we’re all in his power.”

“It’s a quare thing enough,” said Greevy, “that clever min, like yourself, Mr. Stenson, can’t find out all about that lady. Everybody says there’s foul play there; but no wan can find it out and put a stop to it. He’s a match for the wurruld.”

“He has the devil behind him, the scoundrel,” said Stenson, nettled by the allusion to his own incompe-

tency. "And I suppose he has the law of the land, too, which is the devil's handiwork."

"So it is! So it is! 'Tis a poor look-out," said Greevy.

"And yet," continued Stenson, as if speaking to himself, "one or two determined men could stop that fellow's whistle."

"I suppose they could," said Greevy.

"If I were wronged as some others have been — you know I have suffered nothing — these fingers bring me in my three pounds a week as regular as clockwork — but if I had been wronged, I think I'd be equal to the man that crossed me. They think little of these things abroad, especially in Catholic countries. If a man wrongs a family, especially in its honour, he gets his choice, — retribution or reparation, that is, a few days to make satisfaction, and then, a stiletto between his shoulders. No one is the wiser, and no one minds."

"Where is that?" said Greevy, kindling.

"Oh, never mind. These things won't do here. It's in Spain or Sicily they do these things. But we can't. We must hold our tongues and forgive."

"But what's wrong in one place can't be right in another," said Greevy.

"Of course not, of course not," said Stenson. "And it is always wrong to strike a foul blow. I'd like to meet my enemy face to face and give him a chance. But, by Heaven, when I'd shown him fair play, and given him a chance for his life, neither God nor man would blame me if I throttled him, and squeezed the foul breath from his body."

The words were sinking in the heart of the poor artisan, and kindling terrible fires there.

"Formerly, you know, it was the law amongst gentlemen, when one of them wronged or insulted another to give him a fair challenge."

"Was it now?" said Greevy.

"Indeed it was," replied Stenson. "Grattan fought his duel, so did Fox, so did Curran. And — O'Connell

killed d'Esterre; but it was always in fair fight. And no one blamed them."

"Weren't they arrested, or imprisoned?" asked Greevy.

"Of course not," said Stenson. "It was the code of honour; and so long as there was no foul play, but they met in the open, face to face, all was right."

"And is it right still, Mr. Stenson?" said the artisan, with dry lips.

"Of course it is. Duelling is gone out of fashion, but when you meet your man face to face, challenge him, give him his fair chance, no man can blame you. Of course," he added, "I'm not speaking of you. I'm speaking of any man."

"Of course, of course," said Greevy.

"Over there in Germany, for example," continued Stenson, "in every College and University duels are fought, sometimes three or four in a day. One student won't have a glass of beer from another, or he calls him in a fit of passion, a 'Dummkopf,' that is, a fool; or something else happens; and in five minutes they're at it with their swords. Sometimes a fellow gets killed, always someone is wounded, but no one minds. 'Tis a fair fight, and no one can interfere. But, we're a pack of children in this country. We have never learned to use our hands except to work for others."

"That's thrue. By the Lord Harry, 'tis thrue!" said Greevy.

"And then, what drives me mad," said Stenson, "is this. The fellows talk as if they were going to pull down the Bastille. 'Tis all talk, and talk, and talk. You remember at the last meeting, when a certain thing was proposed, it was met with dead silence. There's just it. Oceans of talk; but no man has the courage to strike a match. The next meeting I'll dismiss these cowards, and gather in the schoolboys of the City. They'll do what we want for the fun of it."

The two men paused. One had said enough. The other had heard enough. They were about to part, when Stenson called out:—

"One more word, Greevy!"

He walked side by side with the artisan for a while. Then he said:—

"As I have told you, I haven't much hope of this thing now. But you have been a grave man. You have been ready to sacrifice yourself for the common cause. I have a word to say to you. Look to yourself now! You're watched. I suspect every word you have uttered in righteous anger has been taken back to Holthsworth. And that scoundrel neither forgets nor forgives. Look yourself, Greevy. If we are beaten, you'll be the first to suffer; and the others will say: 'Serve him right!' Good-night!"

Late the following evening, when Mr. Holthsworth drove through his open gates in his brougham under a storm of wind and rain, he was quite unconscious of a burly form that was hiding away in his thick laurels just inside the lodge gate. There was some delay in opening the gate, and the gaslamp shone down on his placid features and his white shirt-front with the diamond studs that the open breast of the heavy overcoat did not cover.

A few minutes later the tram-car rolled up, and was instantly boarded by a heavy, rain-sodden passenger. There was still a delay; and then a cycle rolled out from the lodge gates, and a man dismounted and entered the tram-car, leaving his cycle on the footboard. He stared with all his eyes at the other passenger, and then said:—

"Have you got a light about you?"

The man produced a match-box and handed it to him, with the observation:—

"I'm afraid they're wet."

"You have come a long way?" said his companion.

"Yes, all the way from Kingstown," was the answer.

They chatted gaily till the tram rolled under Nelson's Pillar. The cyclist remained behind.

"Where did my friend enter the tram?" he asked of the conductor.

"The same place as yerself," was the answer. "Jest at Mr. Holthsworth's Lodge."

"I thought so," was the reply.

XXII

ON THE TRAIL

"It's all up," said Ireton to Ashley, when he returned to his rooms after his unsuccessful interview with Miriam. "She's mad, and he's mad, and the people are mad. What the devil can a man do in a lunatic asylum, but let them have their fancies?"

"I suppose so," said Ashley lazily. "This comes from reading, you know. Albrecht has been reading Karl Marx, or some such other firebrand. Miss Lucas has been reading 'Society'; and the strikers have been reading their pawn-tickets. Yes, my dear fellow, that art of printing has been a great curse to mankind."

"I wonder how does Albrecht conceal all this from his mother?" said Ireton. "He's an honest fellow, transparent as his spectacles, and can't conceal anything. He must have spoken to her about Miss Lucas, if not about his political escapades."

"Of course. But the old lady is wrapped up in her Bible, which is a kind of Sibylline book to her. She's the Pythia, and here are the leaves by which all things are judged. She has vision, and the gift of prophecy; but can't see what's under her nose."

"But I can't see why Holthsworth does not tell her," said Ireton. "They belong to the same conventicle. He's one of their saints. A word from him to Mrs. Albrecht would stop all."

"All what?" said his legal friend.

"Well, all intimacy between Miss Lucas and Albrecht first. Second, all connection between Albrecht and these damned ruffians. The fellow, if he liked, could save Albrecht all round."

"Do you think he wants to save him?" said Ashley.

"Why not? 'Tis his own interest, the only motive power with any man."

"Stop that cynicism, Ireton," said Ashley, solemnly. "You're getting into bad ways, my fine fellow. If you commence in that way, you'll never saw bones rightly."

"That's all right, Ashley," said Ireton. "But, look here. One word from Holthsworth about Miriam's attachment to Ian, that is if there be any attachment, which I doubt, would set the old lady afire, stop Ian from seeing her, or holding any communication with her, and he'd pitch up the whole thing in disgust."

"Thou innocent lamb," said his companion, "why wert thou ever weaned from thy mother's side? Did you never hear that such opposition, maternal or otherwise, would only fan the flame of love?"

"I don't believe there is any love," said Ireton. "At least the way she spoke to me would lead anyone to think that she has only one thought in life, that is, to be revenged on society through the mob; and that she was prepared to go to the stake and take everyone else with her for that."

"Precisely. And dost thou not see, thou innocent, that this *ingénue*, this dreamer of dreams, is playing Holthsworth's game well?"

"No, I don't," said Ireton. "I only see that — surely Ashley, you don't mean that she is playing falsely with Albrecht?"

"How?" said Ashley.

"You don't mean that she is in collusion with that devil to ruin the companion of her childhood?"

Ashley laughed.

"No, *mon ami*, but I mean that that devil, as you are pleased to call him, is playing a deep game with both. He is driving Albrecht, Miss Lucas, and the whole mad mob to destruction, and then —"

"Well?"

"And then — when he has crushed these unfortunate workmen in blood and fire, for the matter is certain to

end in rioting, when he has ruined or killed Albrecht, when he has Miss Lucas compromised and in his power — well then, *he will thank the Lord!*”

It was all so clear that Ireton had nothing to say. Ashley continued cynically:

“’Tis the way all around. We lead on a witness, coaxing him to destruction, and then we turn on him. You, men of blood, bring the fever to a crisis before you make the grand *coup*, or you draw on, and force on, an abscess, until it is just going to break, and then you drive in your knife. The Church coaxes a poor devil into heresy and then deprives him of his living. The young demoiselle drags the old bachelor into a declaration, and then — marries or mulets him. It’s the way of the world, my friend!”

“Then you see no hope?”

“Absolutely none. We have failed as actors in the play. Let us quit the stage, and get into the stalls. Read that!”

“A love-letter?”

“Yes, from your astute, and most faithful sister, and my future bride. The orthography is decidedly improved, although the handwriting is colossal as usual.”

Ireton took Maud’s letter and read it, first with amusement, then with consternation. For, after a good deal of childish nonsense, the little eavesdropper went on to say, that she had overheard a conversation between her mamma and Mrs. Crosthwaite, whom she described as a “dowdy” whose gloves were frayed, and whose bonnet had seen hard weather; and the conversation was to the effect that Ireton and Ashley were in the habit of visiting, in a quite unprecedented manner, a lady in Dublin, whom Maud recognised as “The Lady of the Lea” against whom she had warned her *fiancé* so many times. Maud went on to tell that there were some hot passages between her mother and Mrs. Crosthwaite, the former maintaining that Miriam was an utterly disreputable personage, with whom no decent person could hold intercourse, and

Mrs. Crosthwaite holding that she was infinitely removed beyond the sphere of Messrs. Ireton and Ashley; and that it was dishonourable and cowardly on their part to treat her as they would not treat any other lady, and thus compromise her before the world and in the eyes of her guardian.

All this was told briefly, and in childish jargon; but it disturbed Ireton very much. Clearly, affairs were becoming complicated. He handed back the letter to Ashley.

"I suppose it is childish fancy?" he said. "What could they know, down there, about a casual visit paid here in Dublin?"

Ashley shook his head.

"It is too circumstantial to be fancy," he said. "It is quite clear that interview did take place, and it must have been a warm one, if I know anything about Mrs. Crosthwaite. I am surprised your mother didn't write to you, Ireton?"

"N—no!" said Ireton. "Perhaps, it means a visit. If the thing took place, poor mother will become alarmed, and run up to see all about us. But I still think it's fancy."

"You must allow her lover to have a deeper insight into Miss Maudie's mind," said Ashley. "The reported interview did take place, was duly reported to her governess, or in the kitchen, and was thrown into form by one of these young lady-adepts, probably with the laudable purpose of giving both you and me some annoyance."

"I hope," said Ireton, "that mother won't come up just now. My last medical is on, and I couldn't give time, you know. And then, what would she do? Face Miss Lucas, and call her names —"

"For shame, you unfilial ruffian," said Ashley. "Your mother knows better. You will have an epistle and a threat of cutting you off with a shilling, and then, all the paternal property comes to me and Maud. Do you know, I have made an awful blunder, Ireton. I should have anticipated the old lady, and written to your good mother about your doings here in the City —"

"For God's sake, stop, Ashley. The matter is looking serious enough. There's the worst of you lawyers, you look upon life as a joke. Everything from a murder case to a breach of promise is a comedy."

"Hark you, my friend," said Ashley, "that is a gross libel upon an honourable profession. You quite mistake our legal *sang-froid* and its reasons. Life is not a comedy. But we are taught to regard the affairs of everyday life as so many 'incidents,' things that will happen and must happen, but no more to be regarded than the weather of yesterday, or the ticking of the clock on your mantelpiece."

"That's all right," said his comrade, "but all that fine philosophy vanishes, when you are brought face to face with a difficulty. At any rate, you are right in one matter. We must now get into the stalls."

"Can you?" said Ashley drily.

"Why not?" replied Ireton. "We are not implicated in any way that I know of."

"But, *will* you?" said Ashley, smiling.

Ireton was silent.

"You won't, and you can't," said Ashley, holding up his forefinger warningly. "You are caught in the toils, my friend, and you don't know it."

"Toils, what toils?" stammered Ireton.

"The toils of that Lamia, as we once called her," said Ashley. "The toils that she wove around you from that day down in that Sleepy Hollow by the sea, when she swung her sun-bonnet by the ribbons, and the dreaming tide came in, etc., etc., etc."

"You seem to have a more lively memory of these things than I have," said Ireton, looking not a little annoyed.

"I may seem to have, but I have not," said his companion coolly. "You were smitten, Ireton, badly hit. I saw it. You didn't. You felt it, and were unconscious, as a soldier is unconscious of his wounds in battle."

"You are utterly mistaken, Ashley, utterly. I never thought of Miss Lucas —"

"But as a sister? Quite so. I understand all that."

"You don't perceive that you are offensive, Ashley. For God's sake, don't let us break our friendship for such mad fancies."

"I haven't the slightest intention of doing anything of the kind," said Ashley. "Not the slightest. Quite enough of fighting lunatics in the world already. If we are also touched, as we all are, at least, let us be harmless."

"You are quite wrong now in your conjectures," said Ireton. "Utterly and absolutely wrong. I have always thought Miss Lucas a superior being, one quite beyond my ideas and feelings. I confess I'm interested in her, but as a study, a mere study."

"Of course, of course," said his friend. "But a study that somehow comes between you and your anatomies, isn't it so? Well, never mind, old man. It is the way of all flesh. I doubt if you will ever win; or, if won, that she would suit your calling. But whoever thinks of these things? Come, the day is clearing. Let us rouse up Albrecht, and stump the city."

Ian was in his rooms, working hard at a great sheet of paper that lay before him, and over which he bent low as he wrote, his face almost touching the pages. He rose languidly, as his friends entered, and bade them be seated. He looked so weak, however, and his motions were so feeble and constrained, that Ashley said:

"We came to take you out for a run, Albrecht. The day is clearing up, you are stuck here all the morning, and you must get out. But would you like it? Are you able?"

Ian pushed his hand across his forehead with the old, familiar gesture, leaning the other arm heavily on the back of his armchair, and said:

"I think so. I was just finishing these few pages for press."

"Damn the papers and the press," said Ashley. "Look here, Ian, you must give up this infernal business. It is

eating the heart out of you, man. I don't know what the devil ever dragged you into it?"

"I don't know," said Albrecht, wearily. "You are pushed on, on, on, by some invisible power that will brook no opposition. You don't stop to reason, or ask what is driving you onward. You only know that you must go on, on, on for ever; and that every step gives fresh impetus to your energies. Just now, however, I am engaged in pushing the stone up the hill, knowing well that it will slip from my grasp, and drag me with it to the bottom."

He spoke so sadly, so wearily that his friends could almost have cried for him. But Ashley was only excited to impetuous and unreasoning anger.

"But what, in Heaven's name, man, prevents you from leaving the stone alone, and let it roll itself into everlasting perdition? I don't ask now why you ever undertook this uncanny work, so foreign to all your habits and our traditions. But I want to know why don't you drop it, drop it, and at once?"

"You were speaking of going out for a walk," said Ian. "Come, then, let us go!"

He drew on a brown overcoat and yellow gloves, took his umbrella, and led the way.

As he went straight across the City, new energy seemed to be infused into his shrunken limbs and haggard features; and his lack-lustre eyes seemed to kindle with a new light. It was the touch of humanity, of crushed, bleeding, trampled humanity, and felt the very moment he came out from the selfish solitude of his rooms, that sent the torpid currents flaming through every vein.

He walked between his two friends and in his usual manner, head bent down and eyes fixed as if in perpetual meditation on the ground. They spoke little, because they were compelled to walk fast to keep up with Albrecht's impetuous strides. As they passed through the main thoroughfare of the City, a few idlers at the foot of Nelson's monument stared at them, pointed to Albrecht and no more. Each policeman on his beat stared at the

three figures curiously, making mental notes of Albrecht's companions, for he was well known to them. His photograph was in every pocket-book of every constable in Dublin. Now and again, a few fellow-students passing by, nodded familiarly, made a slight joke, and passed on. And still, Albrecht, silent, dragged his comrades onwards, until they reached the end of the street, where it broadens into Rutland Square. Here they turned sharply to the right, and plunged very soon into streets that seemed to degenerate, as they moved onward from second-class shops into third-rate, from third-rate to mere hucksters' warehouses, from these into slums; and the farther they progressed, and the more degraded the aspect of the streets became, the more the population seemed to increase, until by-lane after by-lane swarmed with half-naked, dirty children, unkempt women, and men, who lounged from public-house to public-house, these being the only respectable features amidst the general degradation.

Here Albrecht slackened his pace, and walked more slowly, his dim eyes looking around from one scene of misery to another. Suddenly, a skinny, withered hand was thrust almost into his face, and an old woman shouted:

"Wan copper for the luv of God, me fine gintleman. I'm starving."

And in an instant, the three gentlemen were surrounded by a howling, staring, threatening crowd, demanding charity. Ireton and Ashley were frightened, and looked around for a policeman. But there was none in sight, and the mob of half-starved women became clamorous and offensive. The men, who had been standing here and there lazily smoking in the vicinity of the public-houses, lounged up, and looked on, whilst the clamour increased.

"I declare to God, yer 'anner, I never broke me fast this blessed day!"

"Look at that, yer 'anner," holding up the skinny,

emaciated hand of a child. "What'll put flesh an' bone there, an' we tryin' to feed her on the black tay?"

"Ah, thin, sure 'tis thimselves are the fine gintlemen intirely; an' they have a feel for the poor."

"Git back, ye b—," said one of the rough men, shouldering the women, who protested and cursed, "an' lave the gintlemen pass. Don't ye see 'tis Mr. Albert?"

"Yerra, is that Mr. Albert? Oh yeh, sure we never knew him. An' sure he's the good man intirely to the poor," was the response.

The crowd parted, and the three friends passed on.

"I congratulate you on your acquaintances, Albrecht," said Ashley. "But somehow I can't be enthusiastic about the great unwashed. Toynbee won't do for Dublin."

"No, I suppose not," said Albrecht, flushed from the excitement and the implied compliment of his recognition, "but as you won't believe in God, I wanted you to see there was a devil, whom you must acknowledge."

"Many thanks for your object lesson in faith and morals," said Ashley, "though, by Jove, we were near purchasing it dearly. I shouldn't care for such afternoon lectures on the supernatural at the expense of my gold watch and purse."

"They were quite safe," said Albrecht.

They soon merged into a better part of the City, where one-story brick cottages, neatly slated were the rule. They were the dwellings of the Railway Employés who just now were engaged in deadly strife with their masters.

There was an air of stillness, as of death, around the place, that seemed a chilling contrast to the swarming life they had just left. No children played merrily around the courtyard; no clothes hung on the wires, no women appeared at the doors, or showed any sign of female occupations. Not a human being was to be seen. Here and there, a half-starved dog rose up, was too lazy or too weak to bark at the intruders, but lay down lazily again.

Albrecht entered one house. Instead of a cheery wel-

come, he was met by a sad and sullen look. The workman hung despondent over the fire-place; the wife looked despairfully at the intruder; the children were huddled into a corner, pale with hunger and weeping. The many little articles of furniture, that usually catch the eye in a labourer's dwelling were absent. It was an empty house and a desolate fireside.

Albrecht was too short-sighted to perceive the change, and he said cheerfully:

"What news, Egan? Are we near the end?"

There was no reply. The workman never raised himself from his stooping posture. The wife looked out in sullen, palsied silence into the court.

"Is this Egan's?" said Albrecht. "I can't have made a mistake."

Still no reply.

He went over and shook the stooped figure lightly.

The man sprang to his feet with savage fierceness. His eyes were bloodshot. His bony hands were clenched. He faced Albrecht with such hot anger and ferocity that the latter fell back.

"Is this Egan's?" he repeated "God d— and b— you and your likes, it is; but it won't be his soon. How dar' you come here, you perjured ruffian, who has brought me an' me mates to ruin? We had enough and plinty till you an' your likes come the way to timpt us. You tould us we wor badly off, whin we had enough to ate and drink. You tould us we wor slaves, whin we wor as free as yer-self. You tould us we had inimies in them that wor givin' us dacent wages. And you, all the time, havin' the money of English Companies in yer pockets. Come, get out o' this, you ruffian, or yer dead body will be taken out. For s'help me God, if you shtand there a minit longer, I can't keep me hands aff av you."

"I'm very sorry," said Albrecht, in his polite, deprecating manner. "I shan't intrude longer. But you have done me an injustice, Egan. If I have been mistaken, I'm sorry. But I have taken no bribes."

"Go, for God's sake, go," said the young wife with tears in her eyes. "We are both out of our minds with hunger and want; and we'd rather be alone in our trouble."

Albrecht turned away sorrowfully with his friends who had remained stupefied witnesses of this scene. When he had reached the door, he thrust his hands violently into his pockets, and finding them empty, he took out his gold watch, with its heavy chain, and placed both without a word on the kitchen table.

They had gone outside the block, and were hastening homewards in silence, when the young wife followed hastily and overtook them.

"You must take this back, Sir," she said, holding up the watch and chain. "We dare not take them, and shouldn't know what to do with them."

Albrecht protested.

"Your little children are hungry," he said. "Sell them for whatever you can get for them. They're useless to me."

"We couldn't do it, Sir," said the woman. "They are very valuable; and, besides, whoever would attempt to pawn them, or sell them, would get into trouble."

"But, my dear woman," said Albrecht, "you and your children can't remain hungry. Well, look here, will you come up to Trinity this evening? No. Well, look here, I'll order provisions for you and your family — where, Ashley? I don't know where."

"Perhaps, if you would condescend to take a loan of my purse, Albrecht, until this evening say, at the rate of cent per cent interest on the contents, it would save trouble all round."

"Precisely. You are always prompt, Ashley, in an emergency," said Albrecht, taking Ashley's purse, and throwing out some gold and silver coins into the palm of his hand. "Here, Mrs. Egan, just take these home, and get what you want at once."

But the woman shrank back amazed at the sight of the glittering coins.

"No, no, no," she said. "Just a few shillings, Mr. Albrecht, till things mend. They must be near the end now."

All the pleadings were thrown away. She took a few shillings reluctantly, and under the pressure of starvation. Albrecht returned the rest to Ashley; and they made their way homewards, having taken the precaution this time of securing a cab.

As they passed into the great thoroughfare, certain sandwich-men walked slowly by, ringing bells, and announcing with stentorian voices the notices on their placards:

"Monster meeting of strikers to-night at the Mechanics' Hall, at eight o'clock. Great distress in the City! Final decision of Directors!!!"

Late that night, and when he was plunged in profound slumber, Ireton got his first sick-call. It was to his friend, Albrecht. When he entered his room in those grey hours of the dawn that seem always sickly of themselves, he knew by the strange odour that filled the apartment exactly what had happened. Ian was leaning over the side of the bed, and a washhand basin on the chair was partially filled with blood. It needed no professional eye to see what had happened. Albrecht, after the excitement of the day, had walked up and down his room all night, revolving in his mind all that had happened. His sense of responsibility, always keen, became well-nigh insupportable. He would gladly have gone to the stake for the great principles he had advocated. But to have dragged others, and these the unreasoning and unthinking multitude, through the furnace of affliction, was more than he could bear. And so all night long the thought of that angry, half-starved labourer, of his gentle, educated wife, of those children, huddled together, and needing food, haunted him with a terrible upbraiding and rebuke. He reasoned, argued, pleaded against his own conscience, alleging every reason in his defence as a skilful legist might;

but every plausible argument was knocked into pieces by the terrible fact that here was suffering, suffering which the poor were unable to bear in patience, and that he was at least, the partial cause. At last, wearied out, in brain and body, he undressed and sought rest; but his emotion had torn him asunder and there was a weight on his breast that seemed to choke him, and break his ribs asunder. He fell asleep only to awake with a hot, burning pain in his throat, and a curious salt taste in his mouth. He touched his tongue with his forefinger. It was wet and thick and clammy. He lit his candle. Yes! what he had dreaded for so many months, had at last come to pass. Like poor Keats, on an exactly similar occasion, he said to Ireton:

"This is arterial blood, Ireton. It is my death-wound."

And then, after he had spat out another mouthful of blood, he added:

"Thank God!"

XXIII

TRUE COLOURS

WHEN her two strange visitors had left, Miriam went straight to her room. With a reverence she could not explain, she placed the crucifix Father Hugo had given her on a little table, and took up a book to read. But somehow, although her eyes wandered over the page, she could not guard them from straying from time to time to that singular effigy that was before her, and which seemed so strange and yet so familiar an object in her room. By degrees, and without the slightest conscious effort, her memory began to summon up certain scenes, where a similar figure was a central object. Then, she remembered that she had seen it in the cottages of the poor down in Glendarragh, where she glanced at it, and passed by, in her ministrations of mercy. But these were white chalk or plaster figures, with here and there daubs of blood. But where did she see a brass crucifix before? Then, from the dark background of the past, so faint and shadowy that her memory almost failed to grasp them, came luminous pictures of a face that was always sad, and sometimes bathed in tears, and that used to kiss passionately some such an emblem as this. And, gradually, she began to remember that sometimes the cold brass figure would be pressed against her own tender lips; and how cold, and dead, and metallic it felt; and then, how once she thought the rough nails had cut her lips, and they bled, and she almost smiled as she thought of her childish blood pressed out by the nails of the wounded Redeemer.

She now put down the book, and shading her eyes, gave up her thoughts to memory, shielding off intellect

and will lest they should interfere with its operation. But, suddenly, that face became a mere mist or veil across the curtains of fancy. At the faint conscious effort memory revolted and fled.

She took up her book again; and again, as an old long-forgotten song, or the perfume of a wild-flower, summons up all its surroundings and becomes the centre of a life lived long ago, and long ago evaporated, so the thought of that hard, brazen image conjured up again the same sweet, sad face, and a certain garden where, as a child, she tottered around. And then she closed her eyes, and again memory refused to reveal any more secrets. Only she remembered that she had heard about a terrible sickness through which she had passed in her childhood — a kind of fever, where life hung long in the balance, and from which she recovered but slowly, and but slowly regained command over her mental powers. Then came the days of her childish romps with Ian Albrecht, and the school lessons, and the prim, Quakerish ways of the house, and the stern, Puritanical governess, and the long, dreary Sabbaths, with their early dinners and the gloomy afternoons where she, as a child, had to sit, sit, sit, in a corner of a black sofa, her little hands folded in her lap, and silence, deep, sepulchral silence, through the rooms and corridors of the house. And there was no mother's hand to clasp hers in protection and love, and no mother's voice to soothe childish sufferings or give an assurance that all these would end, and all would be well. The sweet, sad face had vanished utterly from her life.

And then, the great map of her life unrolled itself from the day when she bade good-bye to the great city and was carried down to the desolate and gloomy, but oh, how beloved! home by the sea.

But, as memory failed to bring out any clearer or brighter the scenes of her mere infancy, she clung with all the tenacity of hope to that emblem, which she knew now was associated in some mysterious manner with her mother. It was the first link in the chain of revelations

which she was seeking to drag out of the great dark deeps of the past.

That evening, after dinner, Holthsworth seemed to be sunk in some deep melancholy. It was not a usual feature in his character, or demeanour towards Miriam. Day by day she had to experience an alternation of either boisterous spirits as of one who was trying to conceal great irritation, or of cool, savage audacity, and unveiled threats of what he might, or could do, if his will were thwarted. For, whereas, in public, Holthsworth was all deference and politeness towards the girl whom Society had already, in deference to his wishes, marked out for his future wife, he brought into his gilded home the atmosphere of a prison; and he made himself her indulgent, but tyrannical gaoler.

He had spoken little at dinner, and pushed away nervously and impatiently dish after dish as it was offered, as one too preoccupied with thought, or too engrossed in care, to heed such things. The few observations he addressed to Miriam and his cousin, to save appearances, were essentially commonplace, and were met by commonplaces — the poor old dependent being too humble and servile to venture an original observation, and Miriam too proud to be aught but rigidly polite. When the dinner had at length dragged through, as he opened the door, he whispered: —

“I shall ask you for a cup of tea in the drawingroom soon, Miriam!”

She bowed her head and passed on. She knew that it meant one of the dread interviews.

Yet, she was quite surprised, and taken off her guard, when, in half an hour, Holthsworth came in, and instead of flinging himself unceremoniously into an arm-chair, or assuming an attitude of contempt, he courteously drew a chair to the tea-table, and was studiously and pensively polite to his cousin and his ward. He was silent, started sometimes, as if from a reverie, looked vacant and *distracted*, and asked to have a remark repeated. It was so

unlike his quick, alert, imperious manner, that Miriam conjectured at once that something untoward had happened, or was about to occur.

When tea was over, the other lady left the room, and Holthsworth seemed plunged so deeply in his own thoughts that Miriam argued that he would prefer to be alone. She rose as if to leave the room. Then, he looked at her in a haggard way, and said:—

“Miriam, stay a moment!”

She came back, wondering, and sat down.

“Would you play something for me?” he said, humbly and sadly. “Anything, anything!”

“With pleasure,” she said, going to the piano. “What shall it be?”

“Anything, anything,” he said again, as if seeking to distract himself from some foreboding, or remorseful imagination.

She played over a short *Etude* of Chopin’s, and stopped.

“Thank you,” he said. “Come hither. I want to speak.”

She came over and sat down.

He remained for some time in meditation, and then said, in a half-tremulous way:—

“Miriam, I haven’t been kind to you. Can you forgive?”

“I have nothing to forgive,” she said at once. “I am used to unkindness.”

“Yes,” he said, “the world has used you badly. But I—I should have known better.”

She was softened by his compunction and replied:—

“I have nothing to complain of, so far as my material comfort is concerned. You have surrounded me with every luxury that a girl could desire. This I cannot forget, even though at times your manner may be harsh and grating.”

“’Tis all manner, manner,” he said. “You, young girls, who know nothing of the world cannot understand the fires, the fierce fires through which we have to pass.

And, alas! we bring with us into domestic life the irritation which friction with the world necessarily occasions."

"Yes," he said, resuming after a few minutes' silence, "I have been unkind, God knows, unwittingly; but, then, Miriam, you have not been — too gentle, you know. — There, I shouldn't have said that," he cried, as if pulling himself up. "You are not like other girls, as I am not like other men."

It was so much of a soliloquy that Miriam did not interrupt.

"Well," he said at length, "the punishment has come home."

Again Miriam waited.

"I have been taunted with my solicitude about you, Miriam," he continued, "in the little society wherein I move. I have been chaffed about it in my Club — damn the hounds! And," he laughed sardonically, "I have been condemned for it in the wretched conventicle which I frequent. I wonder they dare, for they know my power, and — they know my will. But, so it is. These wretches, whom I despise, and who know I despise them, have actually dared in public, in public, to rebuke *me* for harbouring *you!*"

He laid much emphasis on the *me* and *you*, as if they stood alone against the world. At length Miriam said: —

"I am very sorry. I know I have been a burden and an embarrassment to you. But you must do me the justice of remembering that I have sought to spare you, if only you would consent."

"True, true," he said. "I am imputing nothing to you, Miriam. You have been always and strictly honourable. But I could not bring myself to do it. I could not. I could not."

Again there was silence.

"See how it has been. Your father, my earliest and dearest friend, places you under my protection; and as if he foresees something, he is instantly snatched away. Was I not bound to extend to you the protection he

claimed? Could I do ought but what I have done? Perhaps," he said, shifting uneasily in his seat, "I have not been so circumspect as I might have been. I have allowed my feelings to betray themselves. And that was not right. No! that was not honourable."

There was something in the abject appearance of the man that touched Miriam. She thought that this was the better self that was now being revealed. Perhaps, she had judged him rashly. Perhaps, under a repulsive demeanour, there may have been hidden nobler feelings that just now were revealing themselves. Her own generous impulses moved forward to meet his.

"You have done me too much honour," she said, "in asking me to share your home permanently. But I knew this could never be. But I did not know that the shadow of my shame, whatever it is, followed you!"

"There now, there now," he said, deprecatingly, "you must not allow that to distress you. I hope I am made of tougher metal than to heed the gossip of old tabbies around a tea-table."

"But you have just said that it was beginning to grow embarrassing," persisted Miriam. "Now, you know I hate this life. I have been brought up in a simpler way, amongst simple people. I hate all this dressing and undressing, these theatres, these parties — all that staring and jostling, and gossip and insincerity. As I say, I am not used to it, and never shall be. If my presence here, besides being a torture to me, is an embarrassment to you, let me go. I ask for nothing more."

Poor girl! Like all emotional natures, she had already pictured to herself a new home in Glendarragh — a little place overlooking the sea, her flowers, her books, her friends, her dog and — peace. And her voice took on a tone of emotion that was most unusual with one who held such cold, iron restraint over herself.

Holthsworth shook his head.

"It would be a terrible deprivation to me," he said. "If I had not the pleasure, and — the misfortune, of sum-

moning you here — I could easily have gone on in my old bachelor life from day to day, speculating, money-making, bargaining. It seems there is no other life than this for a man of the world. But great as the trial would be, I would gladly bear it, for your sake, Miriam, but it cannot be. Your father's affairs are embarrassed. The rental on the estate, small as it is, remains unpaid. There is no alternative but for you to remain here; and —"

He suddenly stopped, and passed his hand across his eyes. Then he started, and said: —

"It may not be for long. I must tell you that you may be sooner emancipated than you think. It is quite possible that my own life is not worth many days' purchase."

"What do you mean, Mr. Holthsworth?" said Miriam, horrified at the allusion.

"Nothing more than this," he replied. "I am threatened with instant and violent death."

"Death?" she cried. "By whom?"

"You can imagine," he said sadly. "You see when human passions are let loose, no one knows where they may rest."

There was something in this tone that made Miriam shrink into herself. After all, she asked herself, is he but playing one of his infamous parts. She became at once suspicious and cold.

"I know that human passions are like wild beasts let loose," she said. "But I should need much proof to convince me that honest workingmen would be capable of such infamy."

"You little know," he said, bridling up, but at once falling back into the sad manner he had assumed. "What do you know of the world of men? And, least of all, what do you know of the proletariat?"

"This much," she said, with confidence. "That the majority of them, all of them, are Roman Catholics; and that their training and religion forbids them violence such as you surmise."

"But what do you know of Roman Catholics?" he

repeated. "They are a hidden, secret sect, with all the fanaticism, and blind faith of the Suphis."

"That's not my experience," she replied. "They appear to me to be rather too patient, too God-fearing. I often wished their religion had taught them more manliness."

"There! we won't discuss the abstract," he answered. "This is specific. I have been watched and followed. Not many nights ago a would-be murderer, named Greevy, was hidden in the thicket near the lodge, and followed. And I know I'm a marked man. And, good God!" he suddenly exclaimed aloud, losing his apparent equanimity, "for what? Because I have saved the property of the shareholders from confiscation. Because I have helped (I am but one man) to resist unjust and iniquitous demands. Because I have defended the Rights of Property against unjust oppression. Let them come on, the assassins, let them come on! They'll find one man at least who won't flinch before them."

The desperate energy which he flung into these words, combined with the pensive sadness which had marked his previous expressions, made an impression on Miriam's mind, which she dared not express. After all, she thought, have I been mistaken? Have I allowed my own wrongs to grow and overshadow all principle? Can it be, after all, that this social upheaval is not fully justified, and that the classes who rule have reason and judgment as well as might on their side? It was a dismal suspicion, a painful awakening. And with it came the cognate thought, Perhaps I have wronged this man? Perhaps I have been sacrificing my own best interests, and, what is worse, perhaps I have wrought much mischief to satisfy a girlish whim! Then the letter from Glendarragh came back to her memory, and she was on the point of expressing her deep solicitude for her guardian, and her horror at the contemplated crime, when he broke in:—

"There, I should not have disturbed you about such

things. These things are not for girls. But I needed someone to whom I could disburthen my mind, and whom have I in the world but you, Miriam? No one. I am friendless and alone. But, as I am in peril, I may tell you that I have arranged all my affairs, and yours, so that in any eventuality, your future is secure."

"I am greatly obliged," she said. "And yet, I cannot bring myself to believe that there is danger. I heard of Greevy. He has a personal grievance, I heard, apart altogether from his feelings in this matter."

He threw a suspicious glance at his ward, which she was not slow to notice, and which again chilled her into suspicion.

"An imaginary one," he said. "Or rather, a pretended one. He has not got on to his liking at the works, and he has built up a grievance about a silly chit of a girl who was some years ago in my service, and took it into her head, against my advice, to elope with my coachman. But this is all pretence — all pretence!"

"The girl is on the streets of Chicago," said Miriam. "That's a cruel fate. A father must feel it."

"It's only the inevitable, the inevitable," said Holthsworth. "One case out of a million."

"But that one case touches one heart deeply," said Miriam, as the spectre of this unfeeling dogmatism about fate and accident rose before her. "She was his pet lamb; his, and no other's."

"Yes, yes, to be sure," said Holthsworth. "There's too much made of these things. These Catholics seem to think that all Hell is opened when a girl falls."

"And so it is," said Miriam solemnly. "I cannot agree with Catholics in their worship and their faith. I think both puerile. But —"

"You shouldn't think so," said Holthsworth. "I may think so. But you shouldn't."

She thought he was going to add "Because you have such strange sympathies with them," or "Because they appeal so strongly to you." He was looking at her in a

strange manner. His pretended anger and despondency had vanished. He had risen up, and was confronting her in an attitude of expectation.

She put the fatal question: — "Why?"

"Because," he said, calmly, and as if it did not matter much, "you are a Roman Catholic. You were born and baptised in that faith."

She flushed up. The whole character of the man was again revealed to her, as a hidden thing is suddenly lighted by a flash of lightning.

"It is untrue," she said. "I care not. But you are again deceiving me."

"It is God's truth," he said, moving towards the door. "Ask no further."

Then, as if this were of no consequence, and as if he did not see that the girl was stricken into stone, he added, taking a letter from his pocket: —

"By the way, here's an invitation to Mrs. Stoddard's for the 14th. She particularly requests the honour of Miss Lucas's presence. I'm afraid I cannot go. But please yourself, Miriam, and write in your own name."

He had flung aside his hypocrisy and was Holthsworth again.

"Thank God," she said, "at least I did not judge him rashly."

XXIV

IN THE TOILS

STUNNED and overwhelmed under the first revelation of the mystery surrounding her birth, Miriam sought the solitude of her room, and gave herself up to the varied and conflicting emotions that now agitated her. She could not conceal from herself the fact that Holthsworth, in making that revelation, wished to overwhelm her with contempt. Whatever his motives were in originating the conversation, it was quite clear that the allusion made by Miriam to the sad fate of Greevy's daughter had stirred up the evil elements of his nature; and that he had chosen his revenge. Had he succeeded?

Undoubtedly, her first feeling was one of great humiliation. She had been educated in the belief that the Catholics were a class apart—very excellent people, and sometimes lovable, but removed by some invisible but insurmountable barrier from the society in which she had been moving. And even though, occasionally, Catholics of a higher grade seemed to be admitted into the sacred precincts of social life, it was always regarded as an act of toleration and generosity. Hence, in her own affection for the poor people amongst whom her early life had been thrown there was a sensation of patronage and condescension, such as one might show to favourite servants, who might be admitted into secrecy and confidence, but still, were a class aloof and apart.

On the other hand, when her better feelings began to assert themselves above the first shock of surprise, a curious feeling of tenderness and sympathy began to thrill her. After all, she thought, perhaps it explains everything. Perhaps it is the very instinct of this religion

that makes me so sympathetic with the masses of the people. Yes, there is some tenderness, some sweetness, some charity in my heart that I have not hitherto been able to explain. These people are my people, and their God is my God.

But is it true? Again the horrible duplicity of Holthsworth rose up before her. She had tested it and discovered it several times. Perhaps, for some sinister object, he is lying again. And how am I to discover it? Is it the key to the other mystery?

Then she argued that clearly, if this were the truth, her unknown and mysterious mother must also have belonged to the banned and proscribed religion. But, this would not account for all. There must be something else behind it. And there is no use in challenging Holthsworth. He can keep an impenetrable silence when he pleases, unless he is stung into a revelation.

Then she suddenly remembered that he had spoken of Greevy, and his dreadful intention. Was this, too, an invention? She had heard of Greevy. She knew that he had been injured in a manner that only the most patient forgive. But could it be that crime, and crime of the worst kind, was really in the minds of those men? She had not calculated on that. She wished them to fight, fight desperately for their rights, but no crime! Had the movement gone beyond control? Where would human passion, once liberated, find its term? Had she helped, by her fiery words, to push the movement into anarchy and crime?

The thought made her shudder. Her woman's nature shrank from bloodshed; and she well knew, the deeper these men plunged into illegal ways, the deeper was she involved, and the farther was she in the power of Holthsworth.

She determined to solve the question; and to convict her guardian of falsehood.

Next day, she sought a pretext for going into the City alone. She went straight to the office of the *Watchman*

and obtained Greevy's address. It was not far to seek, and Greevy, too, was at home.

Like so many more of his comrades in this desperate fight, he was now cowed and disheartened. Miriam found him brooding over the fire-place, his unlighted pipe lying on the kitchen table, and a copy of the *Watchman* on the floor beneath him.

He rose from the straw chair when he heard the light footstep behind him, and doffed his hat. Miriam said:—

“Greevy?”

“Yes, Miss,” he replied, standing reverentially in her presence, and too reverential to offer her a chair.

“I am pleased to find you at home,” said Miriam. “I want to say a word to you.”

He then made a motion towards the chair.

“I understand,” she said, “that you, like so many others, are suffering sadly in this strike. Yet, I think, it must end soon.”

“If you could say that, Miss,” replied Greevy, “to a few houses besides mine, it would mane a dale to them.”

“I’m only hoping and guessing,” she said. “It cannot go on much further. But, I understand, you have a personal grievance apart from the public,—the workmen? I mean, you have been wronged in your own family.”

He flushed up.

“I have, Miss,” he said. “But ’tis a thing we don’t like shpakin’ about. I had buried it away, until this throuble came; and it seems to be meetin’ me now wherever I turn.”

“It is not right,” said Miriam, “to introduce a private grievance into a great public cause.”

“I beg your par’n, Miss,” he said. “I don’t folly you.”

“I mean,” she said, “that, when men are struggllng manfully for a great cause, or principle, it would lessen them to drag in private troubles.”

Greevy shook his head. He meant that he didn’t

altogether understand what was said to him, and that he didn't quite agree with what he understood.

"Thim that are wronging us," he said, "says somethin' like that. They purtend they are definidin' themselves, whin they're only seekin' to be revinged."

"Even so," said Miriam. "But we expect more from the men than from their masters and tyrants."

"If you said that in the beginning, Miss," said Greevy, "I'd folly you. But whin you're driven to the wall, and there's nothin' before you but starvation or the workhus, you feel different."

And he waved his hand round the desolate kitchen to show by its utter bareness and poverty, that the shadow of starvation was already there. Miriam looked, and her heart sank within her. It was a gruesome sight. Fireless hearth, empty shelves, bare walls — yes, all had gone the usual way, to the Pawn Office. And the man's face was pinched and worn, as if with hunger.

"It is aisy to prache to the poor, Miss," he continued. "But we'd like to see those that prache practise also. 'Tis all patience, patience, patience with us. 'Tis all revinge, revinge, revinge wid thim."

"I understood your religion was your teacher, Greevy?" she said. "I understood that it had remedies and consolations where everything else failed?"

"That's thrue, too, Miss," said the artisan. "But, God help us, that last prop has been shtruck from ondher us. We were misled into believing that our holy religion it was that was makin' us children or cowards. We're reapin' the consequences now."

And Miriam's conscience smote her. Had she not written some such things as these in the hours when she too revolted against wrong, and forced herself to think that it was this perpetual insistence upon eternity, this eternal undervaluing of time, that was keeping the masses in subjection? Lo! what an evil crop had arisen from a too busy pen.

"At least, Greevy," she said, rising up, "at least I

want one assurance from you. I have been on the side of the workers hitherto; but I never dreamed the strike would degenerate into crime. Can you tell me that no matter how great your provocation, the thought of — of — murder never entered your heart?"

The strong man shook under the dreadful imputation — under the dreadful word that his uneasy conscience had tried to interpret into something else. He felt as a culprit feels who, blinded and maddened by passion, suddenly beholds his enemy dead at his feet, killed in a paroxysm of crime; and suddenly awakens to see the dread thing and its consequences. He blinked his eyes, and let them fall under her steady stare. But he was dumb. He dared not deny; he dared not affirm. He dared not explain. Stenson's fine morality and its strategical virtue seemed too base, too cowardly now. It would never do. It was too hollow. It would only bring down upon him the more withering contempt of this girl, who seemed to be reading his thoughts.

She waited and watched. Then she said: —

"I put the question unfairly. I know that angry thoughts will surge up in the mind under great trial or provocation. And, perhaps, thoughts of personal violence. What I meant to ask you was this — did you ever contemplate, seriously, Greevy, the revenge that is worst in all eyes?"

He looked down, abashed. She said, coldly: —

"Good-morning! I bear my share of the blame."

She went home, and passed straight to her room. She flung her hat on the bed, and without removing her jacket, sat down, her mind a prey to such horrible anguish as she had never hitherto experienced. A great gulf seemed to have opened suddenly beneath her feet; and she felt she was losing hold, bit by bit, of anything that could save her. It seemed clear to her now that she had embarked on a perilous, if not criminal course; and she bitterly censured herself for her folly, her imprudence in yielding to ignorant impulses, where reason and pru-

dence should have restrained her. After all, why should she, a mere girl, inexperienced in the ways of the world, why should she have dared assume a course directly against the advice of everyone that had a knowledge of the world and the ways of men? And here was the end — a tacit co-partnership with men who had blood on their souls, and may soon have blood on their hands. It was horrible. And how was she now to escape? Clearly, but one way; and that was to seek her guardian and make an honourable confession of her imprudence and folly. This meant throwing herself on his mercy; and that meant throwing herself into his hands. This was too horrible. She might have wronged him, done him injustice, pained him; but there must be some other reparation. But what? No, there was no other reparation, and no escape from the toils but one. She must withdraw at once and for ever from all communication with the classes who, by their crimes, had now dishonoured her; and she must explain to her guardian that she had been wrong, had been obstinate, rash, unthinking, and that she had done him injustice in thought and word. Or she must fly, fly away for ever from the City, and the walks of men. There, there was nothing but hopeless entanglement for her for evermore.

Then, for the first time, she began to consider seriously, What, if she were the wife of Holthsworth? It would solve every difficulty. The stain of birth would be blotted out; her religion settled without scruple; her position in society acknowledged; her imprudence condoned; her future assured; the difficulties with her tenants settled; Glendarragh rebuilt; all the old happy relations renewed. Yes! every argument was in favour of it, if reason only could guide. But then, certain things arose up before her mind, certain things she had seen and heard. And her quick fancy began to picture her future with all its daily details. And an unutterable feeling of loathing seized her, and she almost screamed out: —

“Anything but that, oh, my God! Anything but that!”

XXV

"REVELATIONS"

THE morning Albrecht had had the violent hemorrhage, of which we have spoken, two of the chief dignitaries of Trinity were closeted together in close conference. For a long time they and other senior members of the governing body had been grievously troubled by vague reports that came to them, sometimes anonymously, sometimes directly, but always in an obscure, indeterminate manner, which gave them no opportunity of interfering legally. They were old men, and cautious, cautious for the reputation of the College, which would be seriously imperilled if any suspicions of seditious or illegal conduct were to get abroad; cautious of the law, which might be appealed to against them; cautious even of their colleagues, for they well knew that a new soul had come into Trinity, and that men's ideas were broadening out, not only on religious subjects, but also on social and economic matters, where it had been a tradition that principles were absolutely immutable. Hence they dared not act, nor even interfere, lest interference should provoke opposition, and opposition should call for action. Now, action is the one thing those vested with authority dread most; for you may see the end of apathy, but the consequences of even one act no man can foresee.

Hence these old men had steadily refused the earnest solicitations that had been pouring in upon them to summon Ian Albrecht peremptorily, and challenge him to defend his action in taking so leading a part in a movement that seemed to shake the foundations of social order. But they were uneasy; and the sudden illness

of this student, with its likelihood to prove fatal, came at an opportune moment to relieve them.

"I don't know whither we are moving," said the elder of the two. "A few years ago such things would have been impossible. And even now, I cannot understand it."

"It is the march of democracy," said the other. "Do you know, Sir, there is more than people think in the philosophy of clothes. I knew long ago, when I saw your men attending Sunday service in shooting jackets and leggings, that it was all over."

"'Tis rather a comical view of a serious situation," said his senior, with some asperity.

"Comical? But 'ridentem dicere verum quid vetat'?" responded the other. "But, in truth, the matter is only a symbol, and a sign of the steady deterioration of society. When the frock-coat vanished, the levelling up and the levelling down commenced. We haven't seen the end."

"I suppose so," said the other, musingly. "But we must stop the disintegration here. Think of Trinity a hotbed of Socialism!"

"It's not quite as bad as that, Sir," said the other. "The clique is limited even to one. I understand that Ashley and Ireton have no sympathy with Albrecht, although they continue comrades."

"I should hope not," said the senior professor. "Here is a letter from Ireton's mother. These good people seem to think that this is a foundling hospital, or a nursery for sick children. By the way, who is this lady, Miss Lucas, of whom she appears to have such a feminine horror?"

"A very beautiful girl, up from the country, who is here under Holthsworth's protection. You know Holthsworth, Sir? He is a Director on half-a-dozen companies."

The other nodded.

"Well, it appears this girl, too, is tainted with Socialism. Holthsworth is her guardian, but she is quite of an independent style of thinking; and it is said she can write

vitriolic articles for the low papers of the city. But I wasn't aware that Ireton had much to say to such things. He is a good young fellow, and I shall look him up."

"Do so. And just tell him that his mother has some information; and that, if he cares to consult his future, he had better be particular about his company."

"Very good," said the other. "And I suppose the sooner Albrecht goes home the better."

"Yes. Let me see. Yes! The sooner he is placed under his mother's care the better — chance of recovery has he from his indisposition."

And so it happened that just at this crisis in our history, Ian Albrecht was lying on the sofa in his mother's parlour — wan, and feverish, and uneasy. The kind doctor said that the pulmonary trouble did not quite account for his fever. The temperature naturally should be high; but there was some complication that he could not discern. This rapid pulse, this dry heat, and laboured respiration indicated some other trouble. Quite true! but that was not for the doctor's ears, nor for any ears. Those secrets are only for Him, to whom there are none, for He is All-Seeing; and alas! Ian Albrecht had no speech in that direction. If he could have felt that he had failed nobly in a noble cause, probably his mind would have been at rest. But he had his own misgivings; and recently his conscience had been challenging him at least with imprudence. And then, that last interview with the wretched and starving workman woke him up to the startling reality that he had led on unhappy and ignorant men into ways where every step was fraught with suffering for them, whilst he, by reason of his wealth and position, had passed unscathed. And, now, came this most inopportune illness, just at the time when perhaps he might be called upon by the exigencies of the situation to offer himself in sacrifice. What could he say if, in the crisis of the strike, he should be absent? How would these poor, unhappy men deem of him, who led them face to face with the enemy, and abandoned them there? He

dared not divulge his secret to his mother. He couldn't depute Ireton or Ashley to convey his message. They would promptly refuse to have anything to say to the strikers. Then he remembered that the last evening before his first attack, the great meeting was to be held in the Rotunda, where the final resolutions were to be taken. He asked to see the morning paper. Yes! It was just as he supposed. Violent and inflammatory speeches; long quotations from Marx and Lassalle; secret hints at violence; and the whole rapturously applauded by what the writers described as "an assemblage of gaunt, hungry, hirsute revolutionaries — the men who would erect a hundred barricades in twenty-four hours, and die behind them."

It did not cool his fever nor moderate his pulse. His was not only an equivocal position in the eyes of the people, but it was one of self-loathing and self-contempt.

He took up the paper again, and ran his eye down the long columns of speeches. Then he noticed within brackets, here and there, after "cheers" and "hisses," an occasional question — "Where are thim that ought to be wid us?" or, "Where's the Trinity man tonight?" His heart stood still for a moment, then leaped on furiously, and the hemorrhage returned. The nurse was very angry; and soundly rated little Rachel for her imprudence in giving Albrecht the paper. And then, with ice and ergotine, she tried to stop the flow of blood.

"If this occurs again," she said to him warningly, "I cannot answer for your life."

"Would to Heaven it was Death!" he said. "Then I should not be dishonoured."

Death, however, is slow in coming to those who seek it. He is much more rapid with those who flee from him; and for many weary days Albrecht lay between life and death, the little spark being sedulously kept alive by ceaseless and unremitting care. But the one thought for ever burned in his heart — Could he make some reparation to these poor fellows by warning them away from

violence, and from precipitating themselves against the armed forces of the law?

He thought of Father Hugo, the friar who had cast his shadow on Trinity; but he remembered his mother's terrific prejudices. It would have given her a fit to see Father Hugo under her roof. He thought of Stenson; but mistrusted him. Then, one day, the idea suddenly flashed upon him of summoning Miriam to his bedside and confiding in her. These rough men would do for her what they would do for no one else, not even for Father Hugo; and — it may afford the long sought, long desired opportunity of bringing Miriam and his mother once together again. The thought seemed to give him new life. The little dying flame flickered up suddenly under the inspiration; and the nurse was surprised at his renewed strength.

But then — how to communicate with Miriam? He dared not whisper it to his mother. She would indignantly refuse. But, if he could bring them face to face, Miriam's beauty would disarm all the other prejudices, and then — well then, he could communicate his testamentary wishes; and he was sure to have them carried out.

He penned the following letter: —

SUTTON, *Tuesday.*

MIRIAM, — I am unwell. I think I am dying. For our old childhood love, I wish to see you before I die. I have to make reparation by preventing a greater crime, and this can be done only through you. Do not disappoint me.

IAN.

He despatched the letter, and waited. But these days he could not help unconsciously studying the thoughts of his mother as she bent over him in those little offices that only maternal love can suggest. Sometimes, he would catch himself studying her features with his dim eyes, or trying by a pressure of the soft hand within his own to ascertain how far her mother's affection could be tried. He would dream, and dream, that she was generous and soft and kind, and would treat Miriam with mag-

nanimity; and then, there would issue from her lips some dread sentence which, uttered ever so softly, would imply that there was no relenting there, when once her opinions were formed.

And she, his mother? Well, here, too, the chords of maternal sympathy were touched, although they had grown dull and flabby under other influences. For, after all, he was her child, her only one; and no matter how high she soared in the empyrean of her own visions, she was dragged down to earth by this sole human tie, which she dared not break. And yet, there was much restraint between them. He did not think as she did on religious matters. Much reading and little thinking had unsettled his early convictions; and he had come to that pass when he would grow impatient when his mother, in her calm, visionary, self-forgetting way, would sit by his side, and read and expound in her own dogmatic manner her "Paul," or her "Revelations." He would much have preferred a page of Carlyle, or Goethe, or a verse from Clough or Matthew Arnold; but he dared not say so. He had to listen in silence to threats, and denunciations, and "Woes" against the wicked and impenitent. These roused his anger, but he suppressed it. But, when the same gentle, sad voice whispered in its silvery accents the promises of eternal life — "And there shall be no curse any more; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever" — ah, then! the old sweet lessons would come back and touch him with their tender pity and reverence, and he would say: —

"Read on, Mother! Read on for ever! How I should like to die with these words in my ears."

And he would turn round and watch the slight figure, the pale face, crowned with silvery hair; the staid, black

dress, with its only ornament, the gold brooch that held the miniature of his father — and the thin gold chain that wound itself round her neck; the white, soft, thin hands, lying on the coverlet and the Book; the white cuffs, the solitary gold ring; but above all the grey, solemn eyes, that, uplifted to the heaven, seemed to have lost the light of earth, and to be filled with the sacred effulgence of the light that streams from the Lamb. At such times, Ian thought that perhaps he would have done better had he remained away from the noise and tumult and distractions of his life, and remained here, alone with his mother and her Bible, the sea, and God.

And it was on such occasions the deepest remorse would enter his soul for the deception he had practised towards her. At other times he stifled the thought by the assurance that he had done right, that he had acted according to his lights, and that he was bound by no law, human or divine, to acquaint his mother with his principles or movements. If she challenged him, he would avow them. But he was not bound to make revelations, where he was sure to be misunderstood. But on those quiet, solemn evenings, when his mother read by his bedside whilst the nurse was sleeping, or taking her meals, he felt otherwise. He felt he needed to make a confession — a full, free acknowledgment that he did not think as she did about the Bible and faith; and that he had put his principles in practice by flouting all the ordinances of the society in which they moved, and by mixing his lot with the poor and the labouring classes.

One evening, when he felt his strength growing less, and his breathing more laboured, and he thought the next day might not possibly dawn for him, he said to his mother: —

“I want you to read again that passage from ‘Revelations.’ You know what I mean.”

Nothing loth, she took up her Bible, that always lay beneath her hand, searched for the passage, found it, and read it, in her slow, solemn, musical way.

“It is really beautiful,” he said. “It carries out so

perfectly the ideas of all great thinkers that in the end evil shall be no more, but that all shall be gathered into the bosom of the Unknown and the Infinite."

She listened, only half pleased.

"And then," he gasped, "all our dear, old friends, our childhood's companions, all that we loved and honoured shall be again drawn together, and clasped in the links of Eternal Love."

"Not all," she said, coldly. "Only the Elect."

The word struck chilly on his heart.

"But all are elect, Mother," he said, breathing hardly. "There is no exception in the one, great Restauration."

"You have not read the Book of Life, my dear son," she answered, "with profit. Or you have forgotten its chaste lessons. It is written: 'Blessed are they that wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, that they may have a right to the tree of Life, and may enter in by the gates into the City.'"

"Yes! Quite so," he responded. "That is, all, all who have sinned and repented."

"Listen," she said, almost with a shriek.

"Without are dogs and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers —"

He started violently.

"— and servers of idols, and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie.' You see there that outside the gates of Eternal Life are those who persist in evil. Hence," she added, after a pause, "I have forbidden you to see the reputed daughter of Edwin Lucas, for she —"

"Do you mean Miriam, Mother?" he cried, in amazement.

"Yes!" she said.

"The reputed daughter? She bears her father's name."

"There," she replied, "we have better things to think of. Shall I read you from the Psalms, or from Isaias?"

She did. But she read to a distracted auditor; whose mind was far away from the sweet singer and the mighty Prophet, and was busy about other things.

XXVI

A DYING MESSAGE

THERE was to be a pleasant party at Mrs. Stoddard's the evening of the 14th of April. There was to be a dinner for a chosen few, and a dance afterwards. It was one of the few places to which Miriam cared to go, for she found that Mrs. Stoddard, although belonging to the Evangelical party, had none of the Puritanical, straight-laced, bigoted ideas that sometimes characterise that school. She was a kind, benevolent woman, and in some mysterious manner, she had a great sympathy for this girl who, although surrounded by every appearance of splendour and luxury, was yet evidently constrained and unhappy. She, too, had heard all about the mystery of Miriam's birth; and her relations with Holthsworth; but she was one of those fine characters that take individuals for what they are, and heed little the adventitious circumstances of birth or position. A few times she had drawn Miriam so closely to her by little acts of womanly kindness, that the latter was about to open up her soul, and pour all her sorrows into the heart of this sympathetic woman; but experience had chilled her into a restraint that sometimes chid herself at the same time that it repelled others.

All the morning she was busy clearing away correspondence so that nothing could interfere with her in the afternoon; and just after luncheon, she was about going into the City for shopping, when Ian's letter was placed in her hands.

It was a surprise, and an unpleasant one, but she didn't hesitate. She drove into the City, caught an outgoing train, and a corresponding tram-car; and very soon

was over the Hill of Howth and down at the village of Sutton.

It was a fine April afternoon, sunny and warm; and she wished she could linger long down there where the soft waves came in so smoothly and so regularly, or up on the heather-clad cliff, that seemed as remote from the great city and the busy hives of men as if it were placed along the Atlantic coast in Galway or Mayo. But there was no time, and Miriam had begun to understand that *her* life, at least, was not to be spent in languid dreaming by lake or sea, but in the *Sturm und Drang* of a strenuous and arduous existence. Yet, it may be doubted, if she ever felt so unnerved, so doubtful of herself, as just at the moment when, after making a few inquiries, she found herself at Mrs. Albrecht's door.

Ian had been very ill all the night previous, and this morning he was plainly losing strength rapidly. The nurse was extremely anxious, particularly as he seemed feverishly desirous of something, some presence, some pressure of the hand, some message of sympathy, before the curtain should finally drop over his wasted life. She had told Mrs. Albrecht that he could hardly survive till evening; and that he seemed as if his mind were not quite at rest.

"I think, if he could see a clergyman," she suggested. "Perhaps Mr. Albrecht has something to say."

The mother gave a little sob when the fatal announcement was made; but she instantly suppressed it, and said:—

"If you mean any secret trouble or sin, you are mistaken, Nurse. My boy never had any secret from his mother. And for the rest, he has the Book of Life. I shall read a little unto him and soothe him."

The nurse did not object, although she had her doubts about the effect on the dying man.

In the afternoon, the nurse had to announce that Ian was growing visibly weaker. The pulse was so languid and intermittent, and the breathing so laboured, that she thought he had not long to live.

"And he looks so anxious, as if he were expecting someone. I would suggest again, Mrs. Albrecht, that you should send for his clergyman."

"I shall pray with him, and he shall have peace," said the mother.

It was while she knelt by his bedside, his thin, hot hand clasped in hers, that Miriam was announced.

"A young lady, Ma'am, has called to see Mr. Albrecht."

A flush passed across the features of the dying man, as he said:—

"Yes. Go, Mother, and see her!"

Miriam, pale, but quiet and collected, rose slowly as Mrs. Albrecht entered, and fixed her quiet, solemn gaze upon her.

"I have called at Mr. Albrecht's request to see him," said Miriam. "I am grieved to hear that he is so unwell."

"Be seated," said Mrs. Albrecht, with a look of distress. "I was not aware that Ian had lady acquaintances in the City."

"Ours is an acquaintance of long standing," said Miriam. Then, as no look of recognition came into the face of Mrs. Albrecht, she said:—

"You may not remember me. I am Miriam Lucas."

Then the eyes of the woman which should have been filled with the light of eternity on which she, in imagination, was ever gazing, took on a baleful expression.

"Always lying, and the makers of lies," she said, without looking at the girl. "Servers of idols, and makers of idols—how the evil thing comes down from generation to generation."

"If you mean that I have come here to tell you a deliberate falsehood," said Miriam, "I have only to take my leave. I came here, not on my own initiative. It has pleased you and others to forget old times, and old friendships, and under some base pretext to exclude me from a society where I was once welcomed, as a child. But

you will admit, I presume, that I have never sought you, nor cared much whether you sought or avoided my acquaintance. I am here today at the dying request of your son. I have no more to say."

"You imply, then, that my son Ian, has met you; and now solicits a final interview?"

"I have met Mr. Albrecht twice, at his solicitation," said Miriam. "I did not seek him. He sought me simply because we were both interested in a project for the bettering of the poor and the equalisation of the wealth of the world."

"I don't know what you mean, girl," said Mrs. Albrecht, with a frown, "nor the meaning of your words. But they sound ominous. 'The equalisation of the wealth of the world.' I have heard something like that from the trials of criminals."

"You may have read something like it in that Book," said Miriam, pointing to the Bible. "If you open it at the Acts of the Apostles, fourth chapter, thirty-second verse, you may find it. But I cannot wait until you consult the oracle. You object to my seeing Mr. Albrecht. Very well, then. I bid you good afternoon!"

The woman, like one stupefied, or in a dream, made a motion to her to stay. Then, when she had collected her thoughts, she said sadly:—

"I won't discuss the matter. These things are for other times and other places. What I deny is this, that Ian, my son, between whom and me there never has been a secret, has had secret and surreptitious meetings with you, and for illegal purposes."

"Very well, Madam," said Miriam, rising. "I have no wish whatever to interfere between you and your son. As I have told you, I never sought him. You know that I never sought you."

"What I deny is this," repeated the unhappy woman, clinging to some faint hope that she could disprove what Miriam said, and save her confidence in Ian, "that my son did act in contravention to my wishes in meeting you."

"Then I understand you forbade it?" said Miriam.

"Most certainly."

"On what grounds, may I ask?" said Miriam.

"Please don't press me for an answer," said Mrs. Albrecht. "You are unhappy enough. Why should I add to it?"

"Not more unhappy than the majority of mankind," said Miriam. "So far as I can see, the book of human life is written over with 'tears, lamentations, and woe.'"

"Yea," said Mrs. Albrecht. "The sins of the fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation."

It seemed to console her a little. She always seemed happy after repeating "woes" and maledictions. Miriam moved towards the door.

"One moment," said Mrs. Albrecht. "Admit you were deceived when just now you said that Ian had communicated with you, unknown to me."

"I cannot say whether it was with your knowledge or otherwise, Mrs. Albrecht. But this is Mr. Albrecht's letter. Take it to him, and let him explain."

The unhappy mother took the letter, and going to the window read it over carefully. Then, folding it in a kind of unconscious way, and rolling it between her fingers, she remained for a long time gazing through the window. What a terrible conflict of emotion was raging through her breast, Miriam little suspected. She thought of herself, of her awkward position, of the humiliations to which this woman, like all her tribe, would subject her. Then, suddenly, she thought of her own obligations, and that she must hasten home to prepare for the evening, when the little servant appeared, and said timidly: —

"Nurse says, Ma'am, that she fears Mr. Ian is dying. Will you please come?"

The woman turned round slowly, and Miriam saw a dark face and strained and sunken eyes. These few minutes had concentrated in their brief space the agony

of a lifetime. Her faith in her boy, in his integrity and honour, in his trust in her and their mutual confidence, lay shattered at her feet. She said, in a tightened voice: —

“Mr. Albrecht has desired to see Miss Lucas. Perhaps Miss Lucas would oblige him.”

She had opened the door, and Miriam passed out, not knowing whether she was acting for the best. She felt that her own dignity demanded her immediate withdrawal from the house; but then, the words of Ian’s letter came back. Why should she, for the sake of a little pride, deprive him of some last relief and consolation? She followed Rachel across the hall, and upstairs to the chamber where the dying man lay.

The nurse started a little and looked a question of surprise.

“I am an old friend,” said Miriam. “Mrs. Albrecht has sent me.”

“He is wandering somewhat in his mind,” whispered the nurse, and looked a sad harbinger of death.

Miriam came over and gently stooped. Then the tears started from her eyes at the sight of the dread change. For Ian’s cheeks had sunk in in dreadful hollows, so that his cheek-bones seemed to cut the skin. The thick brown hair was matted in curls on his forehead, and his eyes shone with a kind of sightless lustre. He held out one hot hand and grasped hers.

After a moment, he shut his eyes, and began to murmur indistinctly, and with many pauses: —

“Thou art come, indeed — thou hast rejoined me;

Thou hast dared it; but too late to save.

Fear not now that men should tax thy honour,

I am dying: build (thou may’st) my grave.”

“He is quite delirious,” whispered the nurse. “He will hardly recognise you.”

As if to contradict her, he said at once: —

“Miriam? Myrrha?”

"Yes," she said. "Ian, I am here."

"Come closer, bend down."

She leaned towards him gently.

"You can hear, Myrrha?"

"Yes!" she said.

"My dying message!" he whispered. "Save the men!"

Then he paused for breath.

"I foresee," he resumed, after a moment, "a great trouble impending. The men will rush upon their fate. Save them!"

She waited long; and as a fixed look or stare seemed to come into his eyes, the nurse peered down anxiously. After a long time he turned his wide eyes again towards Miriam, and murmured: —

"I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage,
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair."

and then suddenly stopped.

"Myrrha!" he said at length, after a long and trying pause.

"Yes, Ian, I am here."

"Save —" he said, and no more. The large, brown eyes had turned upward, and but half the pupils were visible, and these glazed by death.

"It is over!" said the nurse, wondering very much why his mother did not choose to be present to receive his last sigh of farewell. She was more surprised when going downstairs to communicate the sad intelligence, she found Mrs. Albrecht still standing at the window, and gazing out towards the sea in an abstracted manner. She almost dreaded to approach her, so trance-like seemed her attitude, and said: —

"I fear, Ma'am, Mr. Albrecht is no more."

"He is dead?" queried the mother.

"Yes, I fear so," said the nurse.

"It is well!" was all the mother said, and turned to the window again.

But Miriam, her heart torn with anguish for that death-bed spectacle, for that callous mother, for her own humiliation, hurried home, through hill, and field, and city; and her anguish was only soothed by the thought of that farewell message from the dying lips: "Save!" Yes! there now was her mission — her vocation. All things else should be subordinated to this. Save! There was urgency and earnestness in that sad injunction. Clearly, some crisis was pending, and immediate action became imperative. She determined that evening, as she drove with her guardian to dinner, to broach the matter to him, and to make an appeal to him to have pity and to spare.

The maid who brought tea to her room said: —

"Mr. Holthsworth has left word, Miss, that he cannot go to Mrs. Stoddard's this evening. But he particularly desired that you should not remain away."

There the first plank was stricken from beneath her feet. No matter! He was sure to remain up for her until she returned, for lately he was scrupulously attentive to these particulars. Then, she would throw herself at his feet if necessary, and beg him to spare the unhappy men, now placed by an evil fate at his mercy.

XXVII

A NEW NEBULA

JOHN CROSTHWAITE was in great trouble. He had long ago made up his mind that not "to admire, or desire" was the sum of all earthly philosophy; because it was the only way to keep from care; and "*curis vacare*" was the *summum bonum* in this valley of tears. But it happened in the eternal cussedness of things, that those black cares, should have actually sought out, and found this sequestered parsonage in its valley near the sea, and swarmed on the quiet soul of one, who, by nature and education was least qualified to endure their presence. Parson and astronomer, he looked only from his books to the skies; from his skies to his books; from books and skies to the few souls that Providence had placed under his spiritual care.

His good wife was his shield against the world. Her strong character met all the slings and arrows of fate and turned them harmlessly aside from him. Hence, he had no trouble about domestic matters — bills and servants and taxes, and rates. He was too gentle to make many enemies; he was too humble to be disquieted about adverse criticisms as to sermons and parochial duties. He smiled away little attacks, for there will be wretched little wasps everywhere, who must try their stings on some victim; and on such occasions, he had only one serious task — to soothe the magnificent scorn of his wife.

"After all, my dear," he would say, putting the tips of his fingers together, and smiling in a deprecatory way, "what does it matter? People will talk. And they must talk about something. And surely, the best thing they could talk about is a sermon. It shows they're interested."

"Interested?" sniffs Mrs. Crosthwaite. "Interested? Well, John Crosthwaite, your charity is becoming painful. Interested? yes. But you would like intelligent interest, would you not? You'd like people to follow you with some knowledge and some understanding of what you're saying. But these people — pah! Why they're incapable of understanding anything beyond the vulgarity of a third-class novel. Why that Mrs. B—— who was so kindly satirical the other day, always writes: 'Believe me, yours truly,' with an 'ei,' and 'true.' And she sits in judgment on you, and Jeremy Taylor."

"But, my dear, you know, that orthography is not essential. Some great men spelt very badly; and, in fact, spelling is an arbitrary thing, changing from generation to generation —"

"That's quite enough, John Crosthwaite. I was taught long ago, and I was taught rightly, I believe, that one mistake in spelling or pronunciation condemns a person as illiterate, without benefit of clergy. But, there's the comedy. It is always those backward people that are so free with their opinions. Educated people never criticise. You remember dear Miriam — how slow she was to express an opinion; but how worthy it was when uttered."

"Yes, yes, yes," murmured John Crosthwaite. "Poor dear, Miriam! I wish she were here!"

"Then, I'm going to bring her here, and at once, John Crosthwaite," was the reply.

"Of course, you will, my dear! You were always so good. And it will be so happy once more to see her sweet face again."

"What an innocent you are, John Crosthwaite! And you haven't the least curiosity to learn why I have taken that resolution?"

"Of course not, my dear. I know 'tis only your goodness and kindness of heart —"

"H'm! Yes!"

And Mrs. Crosthwaite began to reflect for the hundredth

time, whether she ought tell her husband all that she feared or suspected.

"I know," she thought, "that I might as well whisper it to the first baby I'd meet in its mother's arms down there in the village; or even to Coppal himself. But I think I'll tell him. He won't understand; but I'll have an easy conscience."

And she did. She told him all she had heard, and all that she feared — Miriam's sad history, her solitary life, her fate linked with that of Holthsworth, the great city, her loneliness, and all the many ways in which a young, unsophisticated girl, even though possessed of a strong character, might be inveigled into dangerous ways. And above all, the treachery of Holthsworth, whom Mrs. Crosthwaite thoroughly disliked.

"I can never get over my distrust of that man," she said. "I didn't like his sleek pietism in Church. Men don't put on those airs of sanctimoniousness, unless there is something to conceal —"

"My dear!"

"Yes! yes! I know what I'm saying," would resume Mrs. Crosthwaite. "I know, and respect manly piety. In fact, I don't see any reason why men shouldn't be as pious as women, and a good deal more so. But you see there was something slimy about Holthsworth —"

"My dear!"

"Well, there! I fling the creature aside. But, imagine this lady in Queenstown, presuming to say that Miriam, Miriam, was unworthy to be noticed by such tall aristocrats as her son! Just imagine it! Why, the wonder is (and this is one of the reasons why I am so anxious to see Miriam), that she condescended to look at the creature at all. If only that little girl were more explicit. But these servants are so cautious, so frightened."

"Is it not better, my dear? Is it not right that they should hold fast the secrets of their households?"

"Of course, I'm not disputing that plain fact, John Crosthwaite! I don't ask girls to betray the secrets of

their families. You shouldn't have insinuated such a thing —"

"My dear —"

"Oh, yes, but you did. You should know me better by this time. But, no matter. When men will interfere in these domestic matters, they must make mistakes. But, if I could see that girl again —"

"And why not, my dear? Cannot you send for her? She will be pleased to come."

Mrs. Crosthwaite drummed on the table with her fingers, as much as to say, what a hopelessly silly creature was her good husband. Then she rose up with a sigh: —

"I fear not. That is the reason why I must go. Now, John Crosthwaite, will you promise to take care of yourself while I am away? Will you promise not to set fire to the curtains?"

John Crosthwaite nodded.

"Not to remain out when the nights are frosty and cold? You know that last attack of asthma is lingering over you yet?"

"But, my dear, how can I pursue my investigations? I know I am just on the eve of discovering a new asteroid. There's a disturbance in the planetary system —"

"There will be a much worse disturbance in your system, John Crosthwaite, if you won't take my advice. I may be away for a week; and when I return, I don't want to find an invalid before me. Do you understand?"

"I do, my dear. But, surely, when the evenings are fine, as they are now, I may go out for an hour."

"Why, there's a sharp frost every night as yet," she replied. "No! Put off your investigations till I return with Miriam. Her bright eyes will see more than yours, John."

"So they will! So they will!" said her obedient husband. "Yes, you are always right. Only bring Miriam back, and all will be right!"

"John Crosthwaite, do you know what I'm thinking?" said his wife with a frown.

"No, my dear. Something good and kind, I know."

"I'm thinking, John, that I am jealous; and shall be more jealous when Miriam returns."

"No, my dear. You couldn't be. Bring back Miriam, and we shall be so happy. But take care of yourself. 'Tis a long, weary journey, and I'm told there are great dangers in those big cities."

"Never fear. Will you promise not to fall in love with Miriam, if I bring her?"

"Why, my dear, I'm head over heels in love with her already," said John Crosthwaite.

"Oh, you bold, bad man," said his wife, kissing him. "There! I'll tell Miriam, what you said, and how jealous it has made me. Good-bye!"

She came back again.

"You're not to change your flannels till I return, remember, no matter how warm the days may be!"

"No, my dear!"

"Well, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, my dear; and take care of the draughts in those trains. Sit with your back to the engine!"

"Of course, of course. Well, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, my dear!"

She had gone to the outer gate, and the driver of the long car that was conveying her to the train was becoming impatient. But she returned.

"Oh, I was near forgetting. The pastilles are in the drawer at the right hand of the dressing-table. You'll be sure to burn them, if the attack comes on. Won't you?"

"To be sure, my dear. To be sure!"

"And I have warned Hetty to have some hot water always ready against an emergency."

"Very good, my dear. You're very thoughtful."

"Well, you see, when I'm dealing with a big child I must be. You won't hesitate to ring up Hetty, if the fit is bad?"

"No, my dear!"

"Oh, but you will, I know. You'll be afraid to ring!"

"Not I, my dear. I afraid of Hetty, well, well, to be sure!"

"Well, good-bye! This bad man is cursing. He says we'll be late. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

"Any message to Miriam?"

"Of course, great love; and to come on at once!"

"John Crosthwaite, I *am* jealous."

"Not you, my dear."

"Well, good-bye!"

"Good-bye! You're a baby, John. But I shall be glad to get back to my big baby again."

Now from all this one may easily conjecture how it was that John Crosthwaite that very evening, as he watched the sky between *Spica* and *Coma Berenices*, did verily discover a new nebula.

Although, his wife had gone only a few hours, he thought it his duty to write to her, to hurry home immediately. And, he also penned a note to Miriam, to whom he enclosed his wife's letter, urging her to make neither demur nor delay, but to accompany his wife instantly on her arrival, for that the place was lonely and intolerable without both. And, as he wrote, the good man laid down from time to time his pen, and leaned back in his chair, and gave himself up to meditation. And, as he thought of the fair girl, so stately, so proud, so beautiful, and of her fate to be cast amongst strangers, with whom she could have no sympathy, the letters that he formed became blurred under his eyes, and he had to put his pen aside.

"Bless me!" said John Crosthwaite, "my eyes are getting dim with age! I must see an oculist when they return. I suppose it is watching the stars, and using only one eye, that affects the sight so much."

A few times in the evening before the post departed, he essayed again to write; but somehow, he always failed. Clearly, his eyes were becoming tender.

Later in the evening, Hetty came in, and said:—

“Barter is after finishing in the garden, Sir. He wants to know will you require him again.”

“Let me see. What kind is the night, Hetty?”

“Very clear and fine, Sir. But the Missus, Sir—”

“I know, I know, Hetty. I’ll be careful. I will indeed.”

“But if you take cold, Sir, the Missus will blame me.”

“Never fear, never fear, Hetty. I’ll take all the blame. ‘Tisn’t freezing, is it?”

“No, Sir! At least, I don’t think so. I’ll ask Barter.”

The loneliness of the parlour and drawing-room was unbearable. He took down book after book from his shelves, glanced at them, and put them back. The very favourite authors, whom he always opened with such delight for their quaint wisdom, and happy insight, and felicitous expression, appeared to pall upon his spirits.

“Strange,” he said, “this never occurred before. Imagine my putting back old Sir Thomas Browne and Abraham Cowley without looking at them. Yes! I fear that my eyes are failing; and yet I am not so old.”

Barter said there was no frost; and the skies were favourable for observation; and John Crosthwaite, well-muffled by Hetty, went out to the shed which he called his Observatory. It was constructed of a very few rough planks with a corrugated iron roof, through which the powerful telescope protruded. The old man sat down; but instead of wheeling around the light framework on which the telescope rested, he gave himself up to reverie.

“How helpless,” he thought, “we are without human fellowship. Here am I now, John Crosthwaite, who, it is no vanity to say, hath a well-stored mind; and, should it be vacant, and inclined to prey upon itself, here are books, and studies, and all the divertisements that arrive from letters. And here is the mighty panorama of Nature, each feature becoming more clear and defined

through this wonderful glass. And yet it is solitude: and I am alone. What's that Abraham saith:—

'O Solitude, first state of human kind!
Which blest remained, till man did find
Ev'n his own helper's company.
As soon as two (alas!) together joined
The serpent makes up three.'

Out upon you, Abraham! That is only historically true, it hath no symbolism, nor meaning. Come back, my wife; come back, Miriam! There shall be no serpent, only the angel guarding Paradise here!"

The old man remained a long time silent, pondering, with a silent weight at his heart, which he could not shake aside. At last, he raised the telescope and drew it around the horizon. It rested on a point far down in the south-east, where one great star glittered as if burning out all its fires, before it fell into the sea. Just above, was the faint coruscation of a tangled mass of small stars, hanging down through the pale darkness. It was a pretty sight; and, many another night, John Crosthwaite watched it with ever-increasing delight. But not now. That dread weight at his heart drew him, as it does all mortals far from the splendours which the Creator has hung in the empyrean to show them that there alone should be their thoughts. But to-night, some strange appearance seemed to dim their splendours, and yes, no! a faint cloud seemed hung between the constellation of the Virgin and the starry fleeces of Berenice's hair.

"Why, bless my soul!" said John Crosthwaite, "I didn't know there was a nebula there. I must note that, and write to *Knowledge* about it."

And he jotted down in his note-book this discovery.

"At 9.30 on the evening of April 15th I noticed with my four inch telescope a new nebula, circular, about 1° $51'$ in length, and about $23\frac{1}{2}'$ in width. It appeared about

2° above the bright star *Spica*, *a* of the *Virgin*, and seemed transverse with the *Coma Berenices*."

He read it over several times, although he thought the letters looked blurred.

"Strange," he said. "My sight seems failing rapidly. When they return I must go at once to Cork."

XXVIII

‘UNUS MORIATUR PRO POPULO!’

“FATHER HUGO,” said the gentle Prior, entering the little cell, and seating himself humbly on the straw pallet that served as bed for the mortified monk, “the time has come when I must place you under obedience, and order that you take no further part in settling, or trying to settle, this unhappy strike. The subject has come before the Chapter again; and the Chapter are quite agreed in thinking that you have done an apostle’s share; and that no further good can result from your interference. You have not succeeded with these unfortunate men! Is not that so?”

Father Hugo glanced at the brown sleeve of his habit, but said nothing. It would be difficult to determine whether a proud man under rebuke, or a zealous man under a disappointment, is the more miserable. But Father Hugo felt his defeat keenly. He knew the Prior was right; but he clung to some faint hope that he would succeed at last.

“Everyone admires your zeal,” continued the Prior (Father Hugo made an impatient gesture of deprecation), “but you know, we all know, that zeal has its limits. Is it not St. Bernard that says that Prudence is the ‘chariot of the virtues,’ the ‘auriga virtutum,’ which carries them all, and without which none can accomplish its purpose? Well, now, Prudence dictates that, everything having been done, that could be done, we must desist from further interference.”

Father Hugo remained still silent.

“Besides you know, that apart from other considera-

tions, the honour of the order is concerned. 'Tis a censorious age, and you know how the enemies of the Church and religion are only too eager to grasp at any little — well, indiscretion, that may be tortured into an offence against society —”]

“But, my dear Father Prior,” said the humble monk, “all my vork has been for this Zociety and against the heresy of Zocialisme.”

“Precisely. But no one minds arguments. Your sympathies, like those we all entertain, are with the people, the workers, the poor, the suffering; and the world will not heed your reasons, when it is well known your sympathies are elsewhere.”

“But, *mein Gott*,” said the poor monk, flaring up, as honest minds will, when they find every motive misinterpreted, every action misunderstood, “can we not love the poor, and keep them within the bounds of reason at the same time?”

“You can. But, as I have said, if you love them, their enemies must hate you, and accuse you of every abomination. If you restrain them, they themselves will take this as an act of coldness, unsympathy, or even hostility. You may remember how our Lord himself was misunderstood — every word watched, every gesture noted, every action misinterpreted.”

“But He did not care, and why should we?”

“Well, well,” said the Prior rising up, “there’s no use in arguing with you, Father Hugo. You’re too subtle for me. But, remember your obedience.”

And the Father Prior left the cell.

Father Hugo remained, sunk in thought.

However magnificent his work might be seeking to right the wrongs of the oppressed, there was a deeper principle, underlying all his religious life — a principle, which admitted of no contradiction in thought, no prevarication in practice; and that was the principle of obedience to his superiors. That had been drilled into his soul by his novice-master, before he had yet assumed

the habit; it had been taught in every book of meditation he had ever read; it had been insisted upon vehemently by preachers at the annual retreats, until it became so established, that it was a violence to nature even to admit the possibility of its being violated. "And now —" the penitent monk thought, as he looked at his habit, "I have been on the point of undoing the work of a lifetime, of proving false to my principles, of violating my vows, and all — because of the vain delusion that I could rein in a parcel of madmen by my feeble protestations, or touch the hearts of those, who were as hardened in injustice as the Egyptian King."

He started up suddenly; and actually ran along the corridor to the Prior's room, where he tremblingly knocked. There was no reply. He gently opened the door. The Prior's cell was empty. He rushed down stairs to the library. The Prior was not there. To the Church. The Prior was not there. He questioned some of the Fathers whom he met, if they had seen the Prior. No! No one had seen him. He went down to the kitchen. The aged lay-brother, with the face of a St. Joseph, was bending over the pots on the range, his spotlessly white apron contrasting with his brown habit. No! The Prior had not been there.

Just then the electric bell from the hall-door began to tinkle; and, in a few moments, a younger lay-brother came in, to say there was a man at the door, a messenger, to ask Father Hugo, for God's sake, to go up at once to the — Terminus, because there was a report that an attack would be made there that night; and groups of men, in twos and threes, were seen wending their way thither. The monk reflected for a moment. The words that had been on his lips, and which he was about to address to the Prior: "Pardon, Rev. Father, and — penance," seemed to die away suddenly. There was a swift conflict in his mind between the call of duty and the superior monition of obedience. Then, by a sudden leap of thought, he reasoned that the absence of the Prior

was providential; that this call was from God for His poor, and that it was one of those rare occasions, when even due obedience may be set aside. With the new words on his lips: *Deus vult! Deus vult!*¹ he leaped up the stone stairs, had a hurried consultation with the messenger at the door; and a moment after, was rushing through the streets, heedless of everything but the one dread that now possessed his mind, that he might be too late to save.

The passengers on the 9 o'clock train from Clontarf that night were surprised to find the train brought to a standstill on the rails about a mile from the Terminus. Those who were curious enough to look out announced that the whole terminus and all the adjoining buildings were ablaze in front, whilst a lake of fire seemed to break away to the south, and to be carried across the line in a northerly direction. It was an appalling sight, even though the fears of the passengers had exaggerated its extent. The buildings were not ablaze; but some thousands of sleepers, saturated as they always are, with tar or creosote, were on fire; and it seemed only a question of time for the conflagration to reach the terminus and wrap every building in one sheet of flame.

By degrees, the engine-driver crept slowly up, and drew in his train just in front of the conflagration. Over an extent of some acres, hissed, and glowed and crackled the blazing timbers, whilst the flames threw a lurid light on the dark, lowering clouds above, and on the figures and faces of a vast multitude of men and boys who, outside the zone of danger, had gathered from all quarters of the city to watch the strange, and unwonted sight. A few fire-engines had thundered up; but remained unused, as nothing could possibly save the property in the grip of such awful flames. Some policemen, on the outskirts of the crowd, tried to keep back many, who through curiosity, were placing themselves in proximate danger of the

¹ God wills it! God wills it!

fire; and there hung over all that strange silence, when men are too appalled to speak, and the voice of the elements alone can be heard.

Such was the spectacular effect presented to the passengers in the train, which now moved slowly in to the terminus. But beneath it, was a something more tragic—the pent up passions of men raging fiercely for an outlet in some mad outburst of crime and madness.

When Father Hugo arrived breathless on the scene, his quick eye saw at a glance that this was the work of incendiaries; and he was not slow to form a conclusion that the incendiaries were the very men against whose passions he had been reasoning and appealing for some weeks past.

“This is the crisis,” he said to himself. “May God help me through it!”

He threw a glance across and around the lake of fire that roared beneath him. He saw firemen, policemen, reporters grouped here and there. The firemen’s helmets blazed red in the firelight, and the buttons on the policemen’s tunics shone like splinters of flame. The pressmen had their note-books out, and were busy with their descriptions of the unusual and terrific scene. They wrote by the light of the conflagration, heads stooped down over their books.

But it was not these the eyes of Father Hugo sought. They quested for other objects; and at last, they rested on a group, that were also watching the fire with little apparent interest or concern. These men were gathered on a pile of railway timber on the side next the railway; and with some swift intuition that thither his work lay, Father Hugo stepped down from the stairs of sleepers where he stood, and made his way towards them.

Greevy stood a little apart from the others, his great, muscular frame outlined clearly, as the blaze shone and reddened his whole front. His hands were sunk deep in his pockets; and he stared across the sea of fire with that sightless look that one sees in the eyes of the insane.

Apparently, he saw nothing although the flames crackled beneath him, and the fire made red shadows in his eyes. He was even unconscious of Father Hugo's presence, although the priest stood quite close to him for some minutes before he spoke.

At last, Father Hugo touched him on the arm, and said:—

"Greevy!"

Under ordinary circumstances the man would have started from his stupor, stepped back, doffed his hat respectfully, and said:—

"I beg your reverence's pardon!"

Now, he stood stolid as a bronze statue, and moved neither hand nor foot.

Again, the priest laid his hand on his arm, and said:—

"Greevy, don't you know me? What's the matter?"

Then Greevy, without turning round, said sullenly:—

"Well. What do you want?"

"Greevy, I'm zurprised at you," said the priest. "Goom home at once, or you'll damn your soul here."

"I'm damned already," he replied. "And my child on the streets of Chicago is damned. But," he added with emphasis so terrific the priest leaped back in terror, "there'll be another damned and in hell to-night before the clock strikes twelve."

Then Father Hugo's temper rose; and he caught the strong man, and shook him. Greevy could have tossed him into the fire as easily as he could cast a stone, or splinter; but he only braced himself on his feet and stood still.

"Is dis what I taught you, you *scélérat*, you bad man, you fool," Father Hugo said. "Is dis what all my zermones, my legtures, have goom to? Where is your fait, your love for the goot Gott? Where is your rosary, your love for the blessed Mudder? Didn't I often say that you were my Saint Josef, my modèle vhookman, my pattern, my example to the odder mens? And now, now, here you are—a robber, an incendiaire, a petroleur,

a murderer? Oh, Vhilliam, Vhilliam, did I ever tink, it would goom to dis? Oh, tink of your fadder, tink of your mudder, tink of your wife, and leetle shildrens. Tink of leetle Alees, who climbs up on your knees an' kisses you whin you gooms home from vhorke in the evenings; and leetle Jimmy, who serves my Mass in the mornings. Where are you goin' to leave all dem? To the vhorkehouse, to beggary, to the streets of Dublin? Shame on you, you big man, to be led by the nose like a fool by dem ruffians vrom England —"

He was quite unaware, during this burst of earnest eloquence, of boy-messengers, running to and from the station to another group, a little further on, who apparently were watching the conflagration out of mere curiosity. He did not hear, amid the roar of the flames, and the echo of his own voice the impatient question, put again and again: —

"Is he come?"

And the muttered remark, when negative after negative was received: —

"Curses on him. Is the fellow going to stag, after bringing us so far?"

Nor was he aware of detachment after detachment of sightseers and onlookers, who crept away quietly from their places on the heaps of unburnt sleepers, and seemed to converge towards where they were standing. For behind them in the deep shade of night, unbroken by any reflection from the conflagration, and amidst a silence, that was made more deep by the crackling of the fire in front, were being massed a large body of workers, who seemed to be only waiting for the man and the hour, to face some perilous task. In the little group of leaders, who still showed themselves clear in the firelight, were men, who had faced danger before. Some of them had seen the inside of prison walls, during periods of great political agitation, and had learned to despise the law and all that it could do. All were dangerous and determined men, and recked little of consequences when a great cause

was at stake. And the vast masses of the proletariat that moved beneath in the shadow, were men made desperate by hunger, and still more by the hunger their wives and children had endured during these last weeks. And there they were told was the stronghold of the enemy — the buildings where capital reigned, the modern Minotaur devouring the substance of their children, and casting the refuse to the dogs. To-night we shall see in fire and terror, in smoke and ruin, the palace of the monster razed to the earth; and all Dublin shall awake to the tocsin of alarm, rung from every steeple in the city, and pealing abroad that the reign of plutocrats and labour-grinders was at an end for ever.

The last train from the North had entered the station, and discharged its burden of passengers and goods. The quiet that comes down on a railway platform, probably in comparison with the bustle and hurry that reign there during the coming and going of trains, seemed almost ominous in view of the stir of life around the conflagration raging quite near. The few, very few porters and clerks, who, in defiance of the excommunication launched against them by the strikers, still clung to their posts, had apparently disappeared. The gas-lamps flickered noiselessly, an engine puffed and snorted in a neighbouring shed. Now and again the tinkle of a telegraph bell could be heard from the office, and that was all.

Only those in the secret knew that in all probability within a quarter of an hour, that quiet platform would be the scene of a short but appalling struggle, and that those rails and gangways would be strewn by the quivering bodies of the dying, or the still corpses of the dead.

Father Hugo was still pleading with all the eloquence of a heart that trembled for the safety of a human soul with the good but misguided man that stood before him. The tears ran down his thin, worn face as resting his hand on the strong man's arms, he argued, reasoned, expostulated. And, at length, he seemed to prevail. At the repeated mention of the names of his little children, which the

good priest uttered again and again; and especially the name of little Alice, who was her father's favourite, the breast of the strong man heaved with emotion, and his eyes began to glisten in the firelight, although he still stubbornly kept his feet rooted to the pile of timbers on which he stood, and his hands rooted in their pockets.

At last, and just as the priest thought he had won his glorious battle, a messenger ran swiftly forward from the direction of the railway station, and whispered a message to the group standing by. Instantly, one of these came over, and whispered in Greevy's ears:—

“The hour has come, and the man!”

Greevy did not stir. A terrific conflict was going on in his breast—the eternal fight between the eternal enemies. He saw on the one hand, ruin to body and, what was more terrible to a man of such intense faith, eternal and irreparable ruin to his immortal soul. On the other, the sense of cowardice in the face of danger, and the indelible brand that would make him for evermore, a pariah and an outcast to his fellows. Yet he thought, cannot I go away, away, to seek my child in America, and to earn an honest livelihood there. It was an unfortunate thought at an unhappy moment. The remembrance of his child's misfortune rose up and steeled his heart against all rational or fine feelings. And he felt at the same moment that go where he would, the excommunication of his tribe would follow him.

Just then, as his soul wavered and flickered faintly towards the wrong, a second messenger came, and said, more sternly:—

“The hour has come, and the man!”

The place seemed now almost deserted. The different groups had passed silently over towards the station; but from the last group came back in a hiss of venomous contempt the one word:—

“Stag!”

Greevy seemed not to hear it. Then, again and again, the contemptuous words smote upon his ears:—

"Stag! stag! stageen! stageen!"

The words struck his hot spirit as lightning would strike dynamite, and with one terrible oath, ending in "Hell and Damnation!" he tore himself away from the friar's grasp, and leaping down the stairs of the piled timbers, he ran after his fellows.

Father Hugo had caught the skirts of his coat to detain him forcibly. The sudden leap forward of Greevy jerked the priest backward, and losing his footing, he rolled down the steps of tarred planks, and into a deep bed of red-hot smouldering timber.

XXIX

DEFEATED

THAT no part of the body politic suffers without entailing suffering on the other members is a truism that is so familiar it is generally lost upon the minds of men, especially when passion has seized them. Men will not perceive what physicians call sympathetic action in the great agglomerate, called society. But the Directors were beginning to feel it; and to understand that victory may be too dearly purchased; and that revenge may be bought at too high a price. Hence, it was not Holthsworth alone that was anxious to push matters to a crisis; but he had assumed the mastery, as strong natures will, and then the weaker elements began to complain and repine that things were not hastening on to a conclusion as rapidly as they would desire. A few times, the better portion argued that it would be well to come to some settlement with the strikers, and end a contest that seemed fraught with disaster all round. But to this, Holthsworth would not listen. His pride would not brook the idea of a settlement. Yet, he was driven on from behind, and stopped, as by a wall of adamant in front. Something, therefore, should be done, and he did it. He drove the unhappy men, starved and desperate, into a position from which there was no retreat.

With just a slight sinking of the heart, because she had lost the opportunity of carrying out Ian's dying wishes for the moment; and with some sense of bereavement in Ian's death, Miriam drove on to the eight o'clock dinner at Mrs. Stoddard's. Here, for a while at least, under the sympathetic and kindly attentions of her hostess,

she felt a relief from the troubles that seemed to be gathering around her.

"We are so glad you came," said Mrs. Stoddard, standing back a little, after the first greeting, in order the better to admire Miriam. "We should be miserable without you. And, dear, tell it not in the streets of Gath, I am glad you are alone."

"You are always too kind, Mrs. Stoddard," said Miriam. "You know I hate these dinner parties everywhere but here."

"I told Mr. Stoddard so," replied the kind woman, "and it put him into ecstasies. He said it was all vanity on my part; but he was pleased, I can tell you. And now, we'll have no one here but a few more intimate friends, whom you'll like. I know you don't care for new faces; so we have no one for dinner but those whom you have met. Oh, there's just one. Mrs. Ireton has come up from the country for a day or two; and she is coming, and her son, a Trinity graduate."

A shade of displeasure seemed to cross Miriam's forehead for an instant. Then she said:—

"I'm not sure if I have met Mrs. Ireton before; but I have met Mr. Ireton once or twice."

"Oh, I suppose so. At College garden parties, I suppose."

Miriam was about to explain; but the good woman went on:—

"He's a nice young fellow, and with excellent prospects. I don't care so much for Mrs. Ireton. She's a little vain, you know, of something or other in these pedigree matters, as if men and women were horses or cattle. You have no idea, my dear, how absurd these country people are about family, etc. It is astonishing how insignificant they become when they get up here, under bigger shadows. But you'll like Ireton. Oh, yes, you have met him. Shall I ask him to take you in to dinner?"

"Oh, please, no!" pleaded Miriam, anxiously. "Anyone, anyone else, please!"

"Just as you please, dear. I must leave you for an instant. Look at the portrait of Mrs. Potter. It's the latest."

They were hardly seated at dinner when Miriam almost regretted that she had declined Hugh Ireton as escort. For she had been placed side by side with a little creature who simply tortured her with platitudes about society, dinners, Castle Balls, etc., until, towards the end of dinner there was a pause. Then he suddenly aroused her attention by saying, abruptly:—

"I hope Mr. Holthsworth will get back safe from to-night's expedition."

Thrown suddenly off her guard, she murmured something; and he continued:—

"Oh, these things are not for ladies' ears. Holthsworth would be the last man to speak of things that would alarm. It was so considerate of him to send you here. It is so like him."

Now, stunned and bewildered, and only knowing that in some vague way there was some grave crisis pending tonight, she feared to ask further, when suddenly it was noticed that there was a startled whispering amongst the maids who attended at table; and after some frightened questioning, Miriam heard Mrs. Stoddard saying:—

"A huge conflagration up towards the north-west, near Clontarf. It looks, they say, as if half the city were on fire."

Miriam, now thoroughly apprehensive, and remembering what Ian had said, turned suddenly to the man at her side, and trying to level her voice, she said:—

"What is it? This fire has some connection with what you were alluding to?"

"I guess so," he said, with the air of one who had had a great secret committed to his keeping. "Your good guardian has laid his traps well, and the fools are now falling into it. Ah, he's a rare diplomatist!"

"But how—how? I don't understand," said Miriam. "What is a trap? What does it all mean?"

"Why, just this," he replied. "The thing is out now, and there's no longer a secret. We business men, you know, must keep our secrets, even from our fair friends. But the cat is out o' the bag. You see, this strike was going on too long to be comfortable. The railway was suffering. People afraid to travel, you know, etc. Well, matters should be brought to a head. Mr. Holthsworth found that funds were coming from England — an English company, that wanted to paralyse Irish trade — and were paid through a fellow called Newton. In fact, it was this Newton, and a fellow called Stenson, the editor of a vile, radical rag, *The Watchman*, here in the City, that were keeping out the men. Well, when patience was exhausted, Mr. Holthsworth nobbled this Newton, the supplies were stopped, the fellows brought to short commons. Then it was proposed, cleverly, I think, that they should terrorise the Directors by violence. Well, they are terrorising them, you see now. But, to-night will see the end of the strike."

"I don't understand. How? This seems but the beginning of greater mischief?" said Miriam, anxiously. "If these poor men burn down the station, it means something like a revolution in the City!"

"Not by any manner of means!" said the fellow. "Because your brave guardian — oh, if we had only a hundred brave men like him! — is just now snugly hidden in one of the secret apartments of the station, with fifty armed police; and the moment Sir Rioters put a match to the buildings, they will be blown into Hell!"

The terror of the thing helped Miriam to swallow her disgust and anger; and then, Mrs. Stoddard said: —

"Perhaps we can see from the verandah!" And all rose and went out.

Yes. Clearly a conflagration was raging away up towards the north, probably two or three miles away. Were it another time of the year it might have been taken for one of those burning, lurid sunsets, that are wrapped round in purple and yellow splendours whilst the clouds

in the zenith take but a faint pallor of pink or azure from the far glories beneath the horizon. For all the sky was red and yellow, as if splashed in these colours from a cauldron of fire that raged beneath; and now and again, from the level monotone of the horizon, jets of flame burst up, and instantly subsided to be followed by fresh outbursts of fire where the fresh fuel was flung in.

The guests gathered on the verandah gave vent to their alarm in all kinds of absurd surmises as to the locality, the cause, the extent of the conflagration. Gentlemen with half-burnt cigars in their hands, pointed out places where the fires would reach if unchecked; and various were the conjectures as to whether it was accidental, or the work of incendiaries, or the beginning of some dread outburst of crime that would paralyse the world.

"There certainly is some evil work brewing for some time past in the City," said an old gentleman who had pulled up the collar of his dress coat around his neck to guard against a chill. "The authorities are aware that Anarchists have got into the City; and I'm told that, quite unnoticed, a good many leading men are escorted by private detectives."

"Yes, yes! the old story," cried an impatient stock broker. "Toleration and patience carried too far; and then futile attempts to check murder and arson."

"And an incendiary Press!" cried a third. "I have seen but one number of a vile rag called *The Watchman*; but I assure you I'm amazed that we have not had an epidemic of crime in the City."

"What fools these are," whispered the creature that had escorted Miriam to the dinner-table, and who still regarded himself as her protector, as she shivered near him. "How little they know! But you are cold, Miss Lucas! Let me get your wraps."

"If you please," she said, in a low voice. "The maids know — No! I must get them myself, many thanks. They are in a special place."

He pleaded. But she passed on into the house. Hugh

Ireton, wrapped in thought, was standing alone at a window. She stepped up to him.

"Mr. Ireton, do me a favour!"

"With pleasure," he said.

"Call me a cab as quickly as possible; and — let no one know!"

"Certainly!" he replied, not a little surprised at her condescension, for she had hardly noticed him during the evening. And there was a suppressed excitement in her tone and manner, that seemed very strange in one who was always so cold and almost supercilious. He stepped out of the house, crossed the garden, and after a few minutes returned, and informed Miriam, now cloaked and furred, that all was ready. She looked very beautiful there under the gaslight, her face uplifted as if under the spell of some inspiration, her eyes dilated, and her lips partly open, as if she were about to speak and challenge the world.

"The cab is ready," said Hugh Ireton. "May I escort you?"

She said nothing, but passed across the garden, Ireton at her side. He saw her into the cab, and closed the door.

"What address?" he said, in answer to a look from the driver.

"Where the fire is raging," she said. "And tell him quick! quick! lives are depending on it."

Then, taking no notice of Ireton's astonishment, she said, hastily: —

"Ian died to-day. I was with him. He left me a message. I go to fulfil it."

"Then," said Ireton, unlocking the door, "I go with you."

"No, no, no," she cried, detaining his hand. "This is an occasion of great peril. I go alone."

"Just the reason," he cried, passionately, "that you need a protector. Oh, Miss Lucas, Miriam, don't you remember what Ian said many months ago, when we

first met — that I, that you — Oh, my God! I cannot say it now. But, please, let me go, Miss Lucas. You dare not go alone. There is danger. Let me share it! If only for poor Albrecht's sake!"

She seemed to hesitate for a moment, but then quickly made up her mind. Holding out her hand, she said gently: —

"Not now, Mr. Ireton; not now! This," she said, pointing to the horizon, "is *our* work for good or ill. I must accomplish my mission alone."

"One word, then," he said. "If you need me at any time, will you summon me at once?"

She hesitated for a moment. Then said: — "Yes!"

He thanked her, and the cab rolled away.

The sudden fall of Father Hugo into the pit of blazing timbers had attracted to that point the eyes of all the spectators; and a hundred willing hands were promptly extended to rescue him. He was fearfully burned about the head; and his hands were almost scorched to a cinder. His thick habit seemed to have resisted the action of the fire. It was scorched badly, but had not taken fire, except in the one place, where, fallen on his side, the rough frieze was burned away, and the flesh was raised in one painful and terrible blister.

There were a hundred anxious and angry questions as to how he had fallen. Some said he was thrown in; others, that he fell; others, that the sleepers had rolled from beneath him. One said he had seen a struggle, and that the man who had flung in the devoted priest had suddenly disappeared in the darkness. But his charred and insensible form was gently and reverentially raised by the people; and carried, amid a tumult of tears and mournings, to the monastery, whence he had set out, alas, under disobedience, a few hours before.

It was quite true that the man with whom he had struggled had plunged into the darkness. As if stung

by remorse, and now wholly given up to an evil spirit, Greevy marched forward at the head of the rioters towards the railway station. When they were quite close, he gave the order to halt; and then, a form came out of darkness and assumed the command. In a few rapid words he appointed the different groups to their deadly task—Some were to enter the goods store, seize the petroleum, and the barrels of carriage grease, and set the stores on fire. Some were to cut the telegraph wires, and then the gas pipes, setting the latter ablaze. Some were to enter the different rooms of the station, and were to wreck everything, but were to abstract nothing. And some were to remain outside to give warning of the approach of help or the police. It was hoped that the work of destruction could be accomplished before these latter appeared; and then the wreckers were to scatter in every direction.

They were moving forward cautiously, so as to attract no attention from behind, little dreaming that the real peril was before them, when they were confronted by an apparition that made them pause. For, just beneath the first gaslamp outside the station, stood the figure of a woman, tall, her head uncovered, and something in her hair gleaming beneath the gaslight. A rich crimson cloak, furred and hooded, clothed her, round and round, as with a royal robe, adding in its every fold dignity and majesty to her figure. When the first of the band of rioters was about to pass, she said, in a low decisive voice:—

“Stop!”

The silence, the majesty of the figure, and now the wondrous loveliness revealed beneath the light, made the men pause, and gather around her. She stood still as a statue for a moment. Then she said, in the same low, imperious tones:—

“Do you know that you are rushing to destruction?”

There was a momentary pause of surprise. Then the nameless, unknown leader came up, and said:—

“What’s the matter? Why don’t you go forward?”

"They shall not go one inch further," said Miriam, "if I can help it."

"And who the devil are you, to stop men in their work?" he asked.

But he was instantly collared by Greevy, and held, as in a vice.

"Hould your tongue," he said, "or I'll dash out your brains."

"Every moment is precious," said Miriam, still speaking in a low tone. "I have come from the bedside of the dead with orders to save you. You are betrayed. Newton has taken money, and has stopped your supplies. Starvation has driven you here —"

"By G—, you're right, woman or angel," said a man whose withered face told of long vigils of fasting and hunger. "It is as aisy to die shtandin' as in our beds wid our childre howlin' around us for bread."

"Starvation has driven you here," repeated Miriam. "And —" she paused, and then slowly added, "there are fifty armed police hidden here this moment. If you proceed, you will be shot like dogs."

"Yes," sneered the fellow whom Greevy had silenced. "Go back, cowards, at the voice of a girl, retreat and give up your work. And that girl, Holthsworth's —"

He did not say the word, for the huge hand of Greevy had smote him on the mouth, and he spat blood into the darkness. It was the darkness, too, that mercifully covered the hot blush that flushed the face and neck of Miriam. She stepped over the glistening rails and stood irresolute on the platform.

When Greevy struck his leader or captain on the mouth, he did not know what he was doing. He felt impelled to smite and strike something, he cared not what. From the moment he had torn himself from the grasp of the friar, and had seen that this act of rebellion would probably cost the latter his life, he strode forward, as if possessed by Satan, and was prepared to do anything evil and desperate. And yet, there was a remnant of a

chivalrous spirit in the act. In some blind way he understood that this girl, who had spoken to him so imperiously, so contemptuously, a few days ago, was on the side of right; and that, if she deprecated crime, she was full of sympathy for the men who were suffering. In this spirit, he now strode forward and said, or rather, hissed: —

“Some d—d coward said a few minutes ago that I was a shtag. Very well! Now, let us see who’s the shtag, and who’s the brave man. This lady — I know her well, and I know she’s on our side—sez we are sowld, that there’s a thraitor amongst us, and that Holthsworth has his min hid in there to fire the minnit we appear. Well! Now you shtay here; an’ I’ll go forward and see! If they’re there, they’ll arrest or shoot me. I’ll make them. If they’re not there, an’ if I come back safe, you can do the night’s work on which you are set. Is that fair?”

And they said it was fair.

Meanwhile, Miriam, her face burning with anger, had gone forward, and, passing swiftly from shade to shade made by the few lamps that were still lighting, she was about to pass under the archway that led out to where her cab was waiting, when she was suddenly accosted: —

“Miriam! What? You here?”

She turned round, and was confronted by her guardian. He was in a towering rage, for somehow he felt that his evil designs were baffled, and he said, angrily: —

“What brings you here? Didn’t you go to Stoddard’s?”

“Yes!” she said, quietly, though her feelings were wrought up to a point of desperation. “I did go.” It was from something that was said there that I am here!”

“Something you heard? What was it? What could you want here? Do you know where you’re standing? And what might be done any moment in your presence?”

“Yes!” she said. “I know all. Nothing shall be done because I have prevented. But I know now, what I always knew, but sought to stifle the knowledge, that you are a cruel, hard-hearted, unfeeling brute. I know

that you not only drove these unhappy men into that dreadful strike —”

“’Tis a lie!” he cried, furiously. “It was you, and your accomplices created the strike.”

“It was you,” Miriam went on, unheeding, for now the great crisis in her life had come, “that stopped the funds that were supplied from England, and drove these creatures, their wives and children to starvation.”

“Quite true!” he said, cynically. “By G—, you are right now.”

“And it is you that have come here with murder in your heart tonight. For it is murder to decoy misguided men into violent and illegal acts, in order to have a pretext to shoot them down. But I have foiled you. I have warned them, and they will now disperse to meet you again!”

Almost speechless with rage, he gasped out: — “You did! You! You have always foiled me, damn you! But for the last time tonight. Go home at once. I shall follow and meet you there.”

And he pushed her rudely, so that she stumbled and almost fell.

The next moment, Holthsworth felt a grip of steel around his neck. Greevy, who had crept up behind, had suddenly seized him, and with a strong effort of his muscular arms, had bent his neck backward until he thought it broke. He then flung the wretched man on the metals beneath the platform.

“Lie there, you dog,” he cried. “I have killed you, but God will forgive me, although I have sent one more devil to hell!”

The whole thing passed so swiftly that the officers of the law had no time to interfere. But no sooner had they seen the double act of violence, than the word of command rang out; and in an instant the fifty constables, in their helmets and greatcoats, and with their light rifles in their hands, were on the platform. Greevy was instantly seized and handcuffed. The miserable form of

Holthsworth was raised from the deep trough of the permanent way, and carried to the station-master's room. Miriam had vanished. The strikers, who had watched the scuffle from the darkness, and seen Miriam's warning verified in so unexpected and terrible a manner, dispersed in the darkness with hot curses on their lips, and deadly vengeance in their hearts.

An hour later, six constables marched with shouldered rifles through the streets of Dublin. The strong, misguided, generous man was a manacled prisoner in their midst.

Next morning, all Dublin woke to the cry of a terrific conflagration, the work of incendiaries; and a still more terrific attempt at murder perpetrated in their midst

XXX

PURSUED

WHEN tender and willing hands had raised Father Hugo from his couch of fire, and taken him reverently and sorrowfully to his convent, he rapidly recovered consciousness, although the doctor pronounced his chance of life very doubtful, owing to the terrible shock he had received. His first cry was for the Father Prior. His first word, when the Father Prior appeared, was one of humility—a plea for pardon. He knew he had violated his obedience; and he was almost paralysed with dread at the thought that he might pass to judgment unshriven of that sin.

“I did wrong to disobey,” he said, humbly, “and the anger of God followed me and smote me. I crave your pardon, Reverend Father, and absolution.”

And the Prior said:—

“Hath any man condemned thee?”

“No—o!” said the patient, feebly.

“Neither shall I condemn thee,” said the Father Prior. “But, because, dear Brother, there is a sterner tribunal before us than mere human judgments, I will ask Father Celsus to come, and administer the last Sacraments. I would ask you, dear Brother, most particularly to examine your soul, as to whether there may not have been some merely human motive in your late attempts to ameliorate the condition of the people. Alas! the highest and holiest functions and offices are tainted and vitiated by self. Self-idolatry, self-seeking, self-love—who is free from them? Who can say that he can perform any act, even the least, without the eternal thought of self? And if that evil thing enters into, and makes void and worth-

less the holiest and sublimest actions, it may well be that it would also become even the chief motive when we engage in enterprises that drag us out of the safe and pleasant security of the cloister, and place us under the curious and incontinent stare of the multitude. To be seen of men, to have our names, that should only be known to our Divine Master, bruited abroad in the Press, and on the lips of men; to be flattered, and thanked, and praised, especially for generous and noble work — ah, yes! all this is pleasant to the lower self; and there are few that can stand above on the cold heights of perfection without yearning for such delightful, and yet transitory, and fleeting, and ignoble rewards. I do not presume, dear Brother, to judge you. But I have been following your public life with more or less anxiety for some time. The old saying, *Qui bene latuit, bene vixit*,¹ has occurred to my mind frequently when I saw how famous and honoured you had become; and I used to say: ‘Is Brother Hugo now as happy — no, is Brother Hugo now as dear to Our Lord, as when he was the simple and unknown director of the poor in his confessional or in the convent parlour? Is Brother Hugo, the champion of the labourer, the tribune of the people, the enemy of capitalists, the eloquent defender of the weak; or, as some others would put it, for we measure all human character by our own interests, — Is Brother Hugo, the preacher of peace, the restraining power over the angry proletariat, the expositor of Church doctrines, the enemy of Socialism — Is he as happy, as peaceful, as radiant as when he spoke only of God and the soul, and allowed these vexed questions to be settled by the powers that control the angry passions of men?’ Alas! I know not! But, dear Brother, it is not a question of happiness now, but of principle. It is the question, did Brother Hugo, in all his public life and manifestation, seek his own glory, and not the glory of God? Was he stunned by the applause, and deafened by the adulation of men? Or had he always and ever

¹ He has lived well, who has led a hidden life.

before his mind the thought, that we, consecrated Soldiers of Christ, must never, never, never, have a single thought but of His honour; and that we are the vilest traitors if ever we place the idol of self in the niche that belongs alone to God?"

"Father," said the dying monk, faintly, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee!"

"Therefore, too, is thy sin remitted, Brother," said the Prior. "But thou knowest better than I what remains to be done. Let us use the remaining days, or hours, whatever they may be, in such a way that we may avert the anger of God, and mitigate the punishments that await us all."

"Father," said the dying monk, "you will pray, and make all the Brethren pray for me, and —"

"Well, Brother?"

"I want to—to make amends for any scandal I may have caused the community. When I am about to receive the last Sacraments, you will grant me a favour for Our Lady's sake?"

"Well?" said the Prior.

"You will get the lay-Brothers to lay me in ashes on the floor and in the presence of the entire community I will confess against myself my injustice before the Lord!"

"It shall be so!" said the Prior, leaving the room.

And so, when Father Celsus had heard the dying monk's confession, and given him absolution, the morning after the catastrophe at the railway station, gentle and reverent hands raised the agonized frame from his hard couch, and placed it on a bed of ashes on the bare floor of his cell. Then the great bell tolled out, the one bell that was never rung except when the whole community was called together; and the brethren filed in from cell, and chapel, and school, and when the dying monk's room was full, the others remained in prayer in the corridor outside. But not so far as to be unable to hear the sobbing confession of the monk, as he again, in public, detailed the faults of his life, and craved pardon from one and

all, if he had ever given the least scandal or disedification to them. And their stifled sobs mingled with his, because, as in Heaven, so too on earth, spirits bow down before the only sublime spectacle this broken and ruined humanity of ours can show — a contrite and humble heart.

Just as the Brethren were dispersing, the tinkle of the electric bell was heard downstairs; and soon after a lay-Brother came up, and approaching the Prior whispered that a lady craved an interview in the parlour. He went downstairs, and seeing the lady, he motioned her to a seat.

"I came," she said, "to restore to one of your priests this," holding out the crucifix that Father Hugo had given her.

It was Miriam.

"Can you remember the name of the priest," he asked, "or was there any message with it?"

"Yes!" she said. "His name was Father Hugo. He is interested in the working classes."

The Father Prior, with folded arms, looked down on the floor.

"He came to me once on a mission," continued Miriam, "and, after some conversation he left me this. I am going away, and I want to return it."

"Then you haven't heard?" said the Prior, lifting his eyes slowly to her face.

"No," she said. "I have seen terrible things; but have heard nothing of the Father."

"He is dying," said the Prior. "He was cast into the fire last night, whilst endeavouring to keep back some unhappy man from ruin; and we expect every moment will be his last."

"Then it must have been earlier in the evening," said Miriam, as if musing. "You don't know the man's name?"

"Yes! they say 'twas Greevy — one of our oldest Confraternity members, and once an honest, hard-working, nay, even holy man; but brought into evil courses, and

alas! unto this by evil associations. But you must pardon me, Madam. That bell calls me. I suppose it is the passing bell of our Brother."

"Then you won't accept this?" said Miriam, whose horror at the thought of Greevy's crime was overwhelming.

"Did Father Hugo leave you any message with it?" said the Prior.

"Yes! he said something about keeping it till I had learned its lesson," answered Miriam.

"Then you have learned it?" said the Prior.

"No! no! no!" she said passionately. "I am tortured, puzzled, maddened. There's some horrible mystery somewhere, everywhere, that I cannot penetrate. But Greevy — I know him — he never committed that crime!"

"When human passions are let loose," said the Prior, bravely, still looking on the ground, "there is no safeguard, no guarantee that they can be checked. But you can read the account of the whole proceedings in this morning's paper." He pointed to the newspaper, which was lying on the reception-room table. "You will pardon me; I must go."

And Miriam, with eyes distended in horror, read the account of last night's proceedings, retailed as it was with all the graphic and lurid particulars of the reporters' fancies. Then, she followed as in a horrid dream the account of her own participation in the matter. Her name was not given, but there were hints and innuendoes enough to make it clear that she had been engaged too, in this most mysterious conspiracy; or, as it was feebly conjectured elsewhere, had gone to the Station out of her deep love for her guardian, and her solicitude that he should be saved from a horrible fate, which, in a secret manner, had only been made known to her.

This was too dreadful. She felt sick and dizzy as she laid down the paper. The very thought alone that she, Miriam Lucas, who hated publicity of any kind, even to be stared at by unknown admirers in the street; who

loved only retirement and seclusion; should suddenly, and without any fault of her own, be precipitated before the eyes of the brutal public, and this in so ambiguous and hateful a manner, was maddening. She asked herself, for the hundredth time, what had she done? For souls like hers seem to think that suffering and trial are the consequences of ill-doing only; and that a Nemesis, following with sails over the sea and wheels on the land, only pursues the criminal and the base. She had not yet learned the lesson of the Sacred Figure, whose nails now tore her hands, as she grasped the effigy in a kind of desperation, as a something that could no longer be separated from her.

A lay-Brother opened the door and looked in. She gasped something. He came back smiling.

"Would you get me some water?" she said, with dry lips.

He returned in an instant with the water, which she drank freely.

"Can I do anything else for you, Madam?" he said.

"Yes!" she said. "Would you please call a cab."

"Certainly," he said, passing out.

Her brain was now throbbing wildly, but the cool draught seemed to bring her back to the present, as she became conscious of where she was. She looked around the room. It was quite bare, except for a Prie-dieu, on which was hanging a purple stole. Right over it was a large crucifix, the figure of white plaster against a black wooden cross. There were a few large oil pictures of mediæval saints, that seemed to have been disinterred from ancient monasteries on the Apennines, or Swiss convents buried under their snows. But there was one picture that seized and held her imagination. It was that of a nun. A face that was unnatural by its very beauty, was turned upwards to some unseen presence, the eyes liquid in their perfect serenity, and yet transported by the vision of some unearthly glory; the slight, rounded chin, wrapped and supported by the white coif

that encircled the face; and one hand holding a burning Heart, whose crown of thorns was bedewed by the red drops that issued from the ghastly wounds, incised and scarred here and there on the surface. It was beautiful, she thought, and horrible; ghastly, but spiritual; sweet but tragic; and it shadowed forth the existence of some far-away, undreamed of world, some realm of mystery and miracle whose laws and customs, whose joys and sorrows, intensely tragic as they seemed, were yet quite unlike anything that had passed into her existence hitherto. Who was this girl, this woman, she thought? The aureole around her brow answered, "a saint." What secret presence fascinates her with her own too spiritual and perfect loveliness? What is she offering, and to whom? And what is the symbolic meaning underlying that unearthly sacrifice, with its blood and thorns, its flames and wounds? She watched it long and eagerly, her breast heaving with emotion, until she was recalled to life by the lay-Brother announcing the arrival of the cab.

She rose wearily, and felt as if she were a criminal passing beyond the bounds of sanctuary, and liable to be struck or smitten by fierce enemies outside.

"Thank you," she said to the monk, as he held the hall-door open. "I hope Father Hugo will recover."

"He is dead," said the monk.

The announcement, though expected, struck her again with sudden pain. It was the shock of being told that a something, which we hoped would be possibly averted, had rudely forced itself into our existence. Numbed and stupid, she had barely consciousness to utter the number and name of the private hotel where she had been staying. She sank back into the cushions — a heap of misery.

BOOK III



XXXI

HOLTHSWORTH REDIVIVUS

IT was the interest of Holthsworth, as he rapidly recovered from the shock he had received that momentous night, to hush the matter up as much as possible, partly because it connoted his utter defeat, and partly because the episode of Miriam's interference might give rise to awkward questionings and still more awkward suspicions on the part of the public. As he lay in his bed of pain, for the shock of Greevy's assault seemed to have injured his brain, and caused a partial paralysis of his lower members for some days, he reflected with ever-increasing bitterness of feeling, that every advance towards gaining the affections of Miriam, seemed only to create aversion on her part; and he remembered, with a certain sense of self-reproach for his stupidity, that the attractions he held out to her, such as wealth, position, etc., and which would have fascinated ninety-nine out of every hundred of his acquaintance, were regarded by her as arguments against any alliance whatsoever with him. He saw that all was in vain now; he guessed she would never return to his house, or place herself under his protection. In the depression caused by his suffering, he felt that some vast ruin had broken into his life, which would be unhappy for evermore. That dream of a home blessed and adorned by Miriam's presence, was at an end. But, because it had become part of his life, for emotions of this kind seem to grow into and entangle themselves with the very essence and nature of the souls of strong personalities—he felt that his life had been rent asunder, and that only the ruins lay at his feet.

When, however, his physicians, who feared some spinal

or cerebral lesion from the shock of Greevy's assault, became convinced that nothing vital had been touched, and that rest and sedatives would speedily bring around a vigorous constitution, his old energy asserted itself; and during the hours of his enforced confinement to his bed-chamber, he plotted and spun every web of intrigue for revenge on the one hand, and success on the other. And every recollection of defeated stratagems, and revealed and discomfited intrigue, only nerved his pride to further effort to get even with his reputed foes in the end.

Hence, he deemed it wise to conceal as far as possible from public comment his defeat at the hands of his ward, whilst his native pride made him still more anxious to keep out of the public courts and the Press the particulars of the vulgar assault to which he had been subjected. He contrived to bring around remand after remand of Greevy; and, at length, declined to prosecute, thus saving himself from exposure, and gaining a certain reputation for magnanimity.

With regard to Miriam, he didn't know whether he wished her to remain, or to fly the country for ever. Strongly drawn towards her, he yet felt that his suit was unavailing; and, as he could not bear the thought of seeing her married to another, he was rejoiced to find that she had left the city for ever. He concluded that she had gone back to Glendarragh; but this idea was soon dissipated. She had fled the country.

"Like mother, like daughter!" he muttered, when he heard it. "The laws of Nature are inexorable."

And then, a happy idea struck him. "Glendarragh is mine now! She dare not return! I shall see that those hinds accept me now!"

He was in this mood, when one day, a lady was announced. He was convalescent, but still in a dressing-gown, and had not yet left his chamber; but on inquiry, he determined to waive ceremony and see her. She would solve one or two doubts, and open up one or two straight paths into the jungle of the future.

"It is very kind of you to call, Mrs. Crosthwaite!" he said, as he walked feebly across the room to greet her.

"H'm!" said that matter-of-fact lady. "I was sorry to hear of your — accident, since I came to the city. But, to be candid, I came up from the country to take back Miriam with me!"

His face clouded for a moment; but only for a moment. Then, he smiled, showing all his white teeth, and said, as he sat quietly in an arm-chair, and averted his eyes from his visitor: —

"I'm afraid your quest is in vain, Mrs. Crosthwaite. Miriam is not here!"

"Then you can tell me where she is?"

"Alas, no!" he said, in a tone of melancholy. "I understand she has left the country for good. Of course, you know all?"

"I know absolutely nothing!" said his visitor emphatically.

"And perhaps it might be as well if you remained in ignorance," said Holthsworth, in the same melancholy tone of voice, that betrayed however a little heat and sarcasm behind it.

"That is for you to determine, Mr. Holthsworth," she said. "It is needless to say that Mr. Crosthwaite and I are deeply interested in Miss Lucas, and would be pleased if she made our humble house her home for ever!"

"Then," said Holthsworth, smiling, "there must have arisen some occasion, which necessitated your visit to the city on such an errand?"

"Yes!" said the vicar's wife. "We heard that Miriam was unhappy here; and we heard she was in danger from certain acquaintances she had unhappily made; and we thought there was but one way to remove the evil, and that was, by taking her promptly from such surroundings."

Holthsworth was silent for a moment. He had lifted the tassel of his dressing-gown, and was playing with it in an abstracted manner, and as if he were but feebly interested in the conversation.

"You have heard rightly, Mrs. Churchwain," he replied at length. "Miriam was unhappy here, and Miriam was in danger. But I hope you will accept my assurance that I did all in my power to alleviate her misfortunes and to avert her danger?"

"I have no doubt of the fact, Mr. Hetherington," she said. "But it often seems that the very best of us sometimes take to avert a danger, will plunge people into it."

"How? I don't understand!" he said.

"Then, there's no use in my explaining," she replied. "But, perhaps you would clear up one or two things for me."

"By all means," said Hetherington. "If it is in my power."

"It has been said," said the sister, "that Miriam had some particular notions when you got acquainted."

"Well, I'm afraid it is true," Hetherington replied, as if the admission were wrong from him and not Miriam.

"In what way were they unreasonable?" asked Mrs. Churchwain.

"Simply a lack of your hard and experienced good hardy old soul's guidance," Hetherington said, with a certain air of indifference. "Can you imagine any circumstances, where it would be prudent for a young lady of Miriam's attractions to receive young men home?"

"But Miriam was under your protection!" persisted the sister.

"Yes!" he said slowly. "But you hardly need to be told, Mrs. Churchwain, that Miss Lewis had a will of her own, and an ironclad one!"

"Perhaps so!" replied Mrs. Churchwain. "But then, if you found your charge not amenable, was it not your duty to get rid of the responsibility? Remember it was you who assumed it."

"There are circumstances," he said mildly, "which had not, exclusive part of experience, to make steps timely, and then they cannot retract."

"Or will not?" she said.

"Or will not?" he asked.

His tongue was rising under the circumlocution. After a pause, he said, with some hesitation —

"You may not be aware, Mrs. Churchward, that I have been so worried, and am just worried, but a few words of explanation. And you may not be aware that I have been worried — *extremely* worried — by Miss Lucas's losses and claims, and in her person."

Mrs. Churchward was slightly indiscreet, but expressed her horror.

"Yes," he said, nervously. "It was very true at — *London*. I had secret information that an attack was about to be made on the Company's property by the stockers and middle of the city, and I took precautions to prevent this. In the way that that attack with all the possibilities of murder and outrage, was mainly due to certain articles which appeared in a respected financial paper, called the *Whisperer*, &c. &c. I regret to say, *Michael* was one of the chief contributors. I have asked out all her articles. They would interest you as showing how far an individual, but unaided, might go."

He had risen, and was about to search for the volume, when his visitor interrupted —

"There is no need to trouble yourself," she said, "especially as you are not quite strong — *strong*. But you might inform me whether *Michael's* views were also connected with this unhappy business?"

"Undoubtedly!" he said. "One, the *inquirer*, especially for himself and his mother, did not follow the *London* *inquirer*. The others took an active part in the matter, but were sympathetic. But you have not quite heard the end. I don't know if you will be shocked, but, according to all our principles, it was necessary that Miss Lucas should have all the documents of a friend, hired a cat, witnessed the *death* of the Company's property, led the rioters right up to the premises of the *city*

tion, went forward to reconnoitre accompanied by the violent ringleader of the strikers, who, the moment I came forward to remonstrate with her, seized me and attempted to murder me."

"Then you were also at the Railway Station?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite, opening her eyes.

"Yes! I was there to protect the Company's property," he said.

"It was a brave thing to go there, unprotected and alone," she said.

"I feared nothing," he replied. "When God and justice are on our side, there is nothing to fear."

"And this man — this would-be murderer — was he arrested?"

"Yes, promptly. But I have declined punishing him. It would mean penal servitude; and after all, these poor fellows were not to blame."

"It was fortunate that the police were on the premises," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, "and that you were not quite unprotected."

He winced a little.

"It was prudent to take precautions," he said. "It saved bloodshed. If I had not had a strong force behind me, that night would have been a night of bloodshed and ruin."

"You are a very brave man, and a very considerate man," said Mrs. Crosthwaite rising up. "Do you know that I think it quite regrettable that you never attempted to assume closer responsibilities over poor Miriam."

"How? I don't quite understand," he said.

"I mean that you never asked her to be your wife," she said. "It would have settled so many things, that seem now to be in inextricable confusion. Look at our own affairs now, down at Glendarragh. We are all at sixes and sevens about the property. And you say Miriam has left the country?"

"I know it. But don't be uneasy about Glendarragh, Mrs. Crosthwaite," he said, with a meaning smile. "I

have only been waiting to get matters right here, in order to attend to *my* property there."

"Ah, then," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, "that solves many difficulties. Then Glendarragh is *your* property. How pleased the tenants will be!"

"Well, if they are honest, and pay their legitimate debts, they won't find me a harsh landlord," he said. "But, of course, I shall claim my legitimate rights."

"Of course. And you have no idea where Miriam might have gone?"

"None whatever," he said. "The authorities were anxious to detain her as witness against Greevy; but I saw how painful it would be to her to have to appear in open court. I kept them from taking any action, until I was quite sure she had gone beyond their jurisdiction."

"Then you won't insist on her return?" said the lady.

"N-no," he replied. "It would be too absurd to demand her extradition."

"Not even if you were to make her your wife?" she said.

"You are facetious, Mrs. Crosthwaite," he said, with his hand on the bell.

"No, I am only very sad and disappointed," she said. She had reached the hall, when she turned and said:—

"You knew Miriam's, that is, Miss Lucas's mother?"

He seemed to be taken back by the question, but waived it aside with the answer:—

"Slightly."

"Was Miriam somewhat like her?"

"Well, yes! The same imperiousness, the same impetuosity, the same —"

"Great, and generous, and noble heart," supplied Mrs. Crosthwaite.

"N-no!" he said, drawlingly. "I was going to say something else!"

"Then say it!" she said, somewhat angrily.

"The same tendency of—rushing on—to inevitable ruin," he added.

Mrs. Crosthwaite was genuinely alarmed; but she did not show it.

"Not inevitable," she said, "if I can help it!"

"That will be noble, and — interesting!" said Holthsworth. "A woman against Fate, and — Heredity!"

XXXII

COYOTE

A CERTAIN clever artist has etched Modern New York as a vast desert in some mountain wilderness in the Sierras — its long streets the cañons, tortuous and deep and narrow — earth fissures torn open by some cataclysms of Nature, and walled by sloping or perpendicular precipices, here and there notched by windows on which the sun never shines, so high are the walls, so narrow the spaces between. Far down in the depths, a current of life is flowing, now slowly, now swiftly; and eyes of men are pale and colourless, as of creatures, who cannot see the light; and whilst the noise of traffic, the rumble of waggons, the jangling of street-bells, the tramping of multitudes make a muffled thunder far below; you may sit in one of the lofty apartments at the lips or edges of the cañon, and enjoy a silence and solitude as deep, as that where the rattlesnake coils his hideous scales beneath some world-old tree; or the mountain lion sleeps on some bed of colossal fern. The etchings give one the idea of some far-off, old-world, desolate scene — a picture from primordial time, where if a human figure were drawn, it would be that of an Aztec priest, or some Indian chief, petrified into silence and apathy, instead of the bustling, pushing, reckless and undignified New York, the type of progress and modernity.

High up on the very lips of this street-cañon, in a close, narrow office, artificially heated, and this day raised into a kind of sickly warmth by the long level rays of a wintry sun, Miriam was seated. The office was well lighted, for it was free from the shadows which the tower-

ing walls created far below; and the snow, which lay thick on the opposite roofs, and which the wintry sun illuminated into a kind of golden, dazzling radiance, threw its light into the room, and made even the smoked and sooty ceiling above the gasjets, tremble with unaccustomed colour. Yet, high as the office was, the windows afforded but little prospect. There were higher roofs towering over each other like snowy Alps, pinnacle upon pinnacle; there were lower roofs, also snow-covered, on which one looked giddily, as upon a lower cañon ledge, whence the blackness of the cañon in its deeper depths might be measured. There were a few hideous letters of some half-blotted advertisement visible if you opened the window and craned your neck to the view. And that was all, if we except a strip of grey-blue sky that seemed as if cut with a scissors to form a paper roof above the houses. If you opened the window, you perceived at once a conglomeration of many smells, which the frosty air was powerless to annihilate — odours of stables, where posting-horses were kept; odours of a German restaurant — of fats, and soup, and rich pastry; a strange pungent odour of asphalt, up from the broken pavement of the streets; and a faint odour of bad cigars, that seemed to come from some niche or nook in the cañon beneath. But all these Miriam kept carefully secluded by closed windows. On her desk, not the dainty walnut or rose-wood desk, that should hold the stationery of such a dainty lady, but on an ink-stained, rough, and well-chipped desk, was a fragile and narrow but beautifully coloured glass vase, filled with water, in which a bunch of fern, and a few sprays of lily of the valley were drinking, and giving out in return that exquisite perfume that makes one sigh no longer for roses of Sharon, or their still farther Eastern sisters that languish by day, and dream by night in the fragrant gardens of Shiraz.

Miriam was alone — alone with her work, and alone with her thoughts. The former was absorbing, because it was journalistic work, which fell into her hands in some

happy fortuitous manner after sundry sad experiences in the great city, and which now not only gave her the means of subsistence, but had become to her a most acceptable vocation. The journal for which she worked was one of the leading Democratic papers of New York, and was just then sounding the mighty tocsin, afterwards taken up and echoed by the fainter chimes of the New — and Old World — the sound that called for the organisation of the masses against the classes, for the redistribution of the world's goods, for labour against capital, for wages against unearned increments. The policy of the paper appealed to her instinctive love for the people, her old spirit of antagonism against the upper classes of society, her ideas of equality, or of a superiority that could only be claimed by talent, or industry, or virtue. Therefore, she wrote not only for bread, but for principle — for a cause; and she had always felt, that to live and labour for a great cause is the ultimate vocation that leads to the emancipation of the soul and the illumination of the intellect. Yet, her work was not so absorbing, but that from time to time, she could lay down her pen and reflect. And these reflections always ended in the conclusion, that society, or social order seemed to be hanging together so loosely that, like an avalanche on the Alps, its most dangerous elements might be liberated by a word, and precipitated in ruin upon the world. She had read somewhere how the Alpine guides in the high Towers of Silence forbade the clients even to cough, lest the least sound should bring down from far heights a thundercloud of destruction. And she thought: what if these words I am now writing should loosen the mad passions of men, and throw society into the agony of pitiless revolution? For the thought of her former experience would come back; and she shuddered as she remembered the tragic death of Father Hugo, the physical ruin wrought on her guardian, Holthsworth, and the long imprisonment of poor Greevy. And her fine sense of honour also smote her with the reflection, Is it right or honourable for me

to sit up aloft here, and with one touch of that electric power, the pen, set loose upon humanity the terrible elements that for ever underlie it, and that are so potent for good or ill?

And following close upon that thought, another would suggest itself. Is there no other way than this to remedy great wrongs? Has it come to this, that the accumulated wisdom of three thousand years, for that seems to be the period in which humanity has been awake from its primeval slumbers, has never yet been able to devise a theory that would equalise the burdens of the race, except the theory of violence and revolution? Where is the wisdom of Plato, the learning of Aristotle, the superhuman science of Bacon? Where is the political foresight, the cabinet wisdom of all the generations of thinkers to whom the world has built monuments of bronze or marble, if here at the close of the nineteenth century, nothing remains for the adjustment of social relations but the bullet or the barricade? She had seen enough of violence to dread its manifestations; and her woman's heart shrank from further experiences. And yet — there was the great problem yet to be solved; and what a failure is human wisdom and foresight!

She took up her pen, and bit it. Her thoughts this cold January morning had run into a new channel; and one into which she could pour the vials of a woman's wrath.

She had written half way through, determined to get the article into the night's issue of the Journal, when the clock struck the midday hour, and she went home to dine.

As she walked quickly homeward along the pavements of the great city, she noticed and pitied the men and boys who in their shirt-sleeves this wintry morning were shovelling the snow away from side-walks and from the high steps that led up to the front doors of stately mansions; and she also noticed, and it appeared strange that it should be for the first time, the occupants of these mansions standing or sitting in the great bay-windows,

with all the air, in dress and manner, of people whose lines in life are cast in pleasant places. Somehow this morning the contrast seemed most striking; and Miriam, watching with side-glances those stately ladies with their white hair smoothed under dainty lace caps, or their daughters in costly costumes, toying with the flashing rings that covered their white hands, or the young men, pale and calm with the faces of Greek gods; and then, the working proletariat of the streets, with their pinched and deep-lined faces, their ragged garments, their sullen looks — thought — Yes, here is the terrible object-lesson of everyday life; here in concrete form is the terrible problem under which the world has ached from the beginning. And am I, she thought, I, an inexperienced girl, going to solve it? And is it left for me to work out the solution of such a world-riddle as this?

She was turning the corner of the street, and looking abstractedly before her, when suddenly she was startled from her reverie by a shower of snow that was flung over her face and dress and boots. She turned around half-angrily to hear a group of young city-gamins, who like their elders, had been employed in cleaning the side-walks, laugh loud at a wretched boy, who, shamed and frightened at what he had done, had let his shovel fall, and stood staring at Miriam, a picture of despair. He was rubbing his red hands up and down the legs of his tattered trousers, when a policeman, who had seen it all, came up; and whilst the youngsters shouted:

“Quick, Coy, or you’ll be copped,” and the shivering fellow whimpered: —

“S’help me God, Miss —”

The policeman said: —

“Do you wish to give this fellow in charge, Miss? He’s a bad ’un!”

A little crowd had collected around the group; and Miriam, anxious to get away, said boldly: —

“No, officer. I think I’ll take him into custody myself, with your permission.”

And instantly, seizing the boy by the wrist, she led him onwards towards her lodgings.

He was too paralysed with dread and surprise to resist; and when, in after years, he was asked what had come over him — him, the most agile and quick-witted street-boy in New York, he could only say: —

“Do you know them fellers that at the theayter makes passes over your eyes and nose, and put youse asleep; and makes youse sing and dance and curse and swear, without youse ever aknowing of it. Well, that’s her! She ’ypnertised me wit her eyes!”

That was just it. Miriam Lucas did actually hypnotise the poor little street waif; and though she held him in custody, and drew him along by her side through the crowded streets to the amusement of many onlookers, it was quite unnecessary. He would have followed her like a dog from end to end of the great city.

She took the boy to her rooms on the third flat of a row of houses, that had no pretences to distinction, but seemed to have been built as artisans’ dwellings. Bewildered, stupefied, paralysed in his faculties, he followed her up the stairs; and when she opened with her key the door of her sitting-room, and bade the shivering little wretch to go near the fire, he went meekly, and lay down on the hearth-rug like a dog.

“Now,” said Miriam, “you remain here, until I return. You shall touch none of those things,” she said, pointing to her papers and little treasures on her writing-table. “But get well dried and warmed by my return.”

She went out again, locking the door behind her, and entered a neighbouring Italian restaurant, where she had been accustomed to have her early and modest dinner. On leaving, she took with her two or three little meat-pies, smiling at the thought of their possible ingredients, but well knowing that a hungry boy will not be too fastidious.

When she entered her room softly, she found the lad fast asleep before the fire. She put down the meat-pies,

took off her hat and cloak, and sat down to study the little waif, whilst with a broad, soft pencil she drew a rough sketch of him on tinted paper.

He was by no means prepossessing, poor little waif of humanity. A sharp, thin face was attenuated by cunning into the lineaments of a fox or weasel; and the tousled hair fell down in wisps on a forehead that was narrowed, and slightly furrowed by the thought necessary for such a nomadic existence. The open mouth showed clean, white teeth; but there were deposits of dirt on his neck, beneath his ears, and on his thin, red hands that now were firmly closed, as if in his dreams he held something that the rapacity of his fellows would take from him. The white skin of his breast was unspotted; and Miriam felt a little sob of pity rising in her heart as she saw how the tattered shirt was held together across his chest with a piece of twine. Outside the shirt was a ragged jacket, seamed and torn and pieced together rudely; and his trousers were torn into ribbons that hung down wet and dirty from his work in the snow. He slept so deeply, so profoundly, that Miriam had not the heart to wake him, although her duties called her back to her office. She laid down the meat-pies near his hands, so that he could not fail to see they were meant for him; and went out into the cold streets, locking the door again behind her.

When she reached her office, she put aside the article she had been writing for the evening paper; and, taking up her pen she drew a sketch of the street-arab, in his unutterable degradation and misery, and then the comfortable, well-fed, well-to-do spectators, that made the Editor shiver a little, when he read it, and hand it to the compositor, with a shrug:—

“This beautiful devil will ruin us, I guess!” he said.

But no! That article sent up the circulation to the hundred thousand; and Miriam was requested to continue her *genre* painting in pen and ink. For this purpose, she had liberty to absent herself from the office; and she saw the dark side of city life; and drew her silhouettes of

humanity with a firm pencil, but with the shadows very deep and dark.

“Art always intensifies,” she said; “and one must preach with emphasis to make the world listen. The world is under an opiate. It is dead to the cries of humanity.”

XXXIII

WOMAN'S MISSION

WHEN she returned home that evening, and switched on the electric light in her room, she half expected that the boy would be gone. There was an ill-defined odour of uncleanness in the atmosphere of the room, and she shuddered at it, and left the door partly open so that the free cold air might play through the apartment. But the boy was there. He sat on the rug, watching the dying embers in the grate, half-stupefied, not knowing what to think or do. The meat-pies were at his feet untouched. The first word Miriam said was:—

"I brought these pies for you. Why haven't you eaten them?"

"Because," said the little fellow, humbly, but with a wistful look on his face, "youse told me I wasn't to swipe nothink. An' I didn't. So 'elp me Gawd, I didn't."

Somewhat shocked, Miriam, knowing that this was no time for a homily on swearing, said, kindly:—

"I meant the articles on the table. I bought these meat-pies for you. Now go on and eat them."

He took them up, not eagerly, nor hungrily, but with a hesitating and leisurely manner, as if he were not quite sure that he had permission to eat such dainties. He broke off small pieces of crust and put them into his mouth, watching Miriam's face all the while in a puzzled manner.

"Now, quick," she said at last, "get through these things quickly. I want you to help me make up the fire and get things for tea. Do you know how to do anything?"

"I does," he said, his mouth half full of food, "I knows leap-frog, and I knows how to wheel—would youse like to see me wheeling?"

He thought he should make some return for such benefaction.

"I'm not sure that I know what it is," said Miriam. "But I doubt if this is the place for it."

"An' I knows the straight tip on *Jolly Beggar*; cos why—the big toff, whose leathers I shines, I heard him a-sayin', 'Go twenty on the *Beggar* —'"

"What in the world is the *Beggar*?" asked the puzzled Miriam.

"Ah, go cheese yesself!" said the boy in disgust. "Ye don't git over me in dat way."

Miriam smiled and busied herself in getting tea ready. The boy munched on, half afraid that he had committed himself by his rudeness.

"Does your mother know you're learning such things?" Miriam asked at length.

"Mudder? I has no mudder," said the boy. "Why youse a reg'lar guy."

Clearly the food was working a change in the temperament of the boy.

"I suppose so," said Miriam, meekly, in answer to his last observation. "Now have some tea."

She had laid out her own dainty china set on the table, but had taken the precaution to give the boy his tea in the large slop-bowl, partly because she thought he would like a larger quantity, and partly for other reasons. But, in a moment, she grew ashamed of her fastidiousness, in this respect, and she took one of her smallest cups and handed it to the waif. He gulped it down at one draught.

"Nah," said he, "that ain't no good. Say, where does youse buy your tea?"

She was amused, but forbore replying.

"Will you have more tea?"

"That ain't nice tea," he said, grinning. "Ef youse loikes, I'll show youse old Bettini's stand. Ah, that's tea! Five cents for all you kin carry away wit youse, and grub and 'lasses into the bargain. Say, youse has no 'lasses now, has you?"

"'Lasses," said the bewildered Miriam. "What are 'lasses?"

"Ah, git along, youse knows nothink," said her guest. "Gi' me five cents, and, golly, I'll have a gorge that'll do till Christmas!"

"I'm very sorry," said Miriam, disappointed, "that I cannot do better for you. Would you like to remain here always?"

"Oh, crikey," said the waif. "Wot fer? Nah," he continued, with disgust, "wot would the newsies do, and the sweepers? Wy, old Snoozer wouldn't live, if he didn't see me at my purfession."

"Who is old Snoozer?" asked Miriam, beginning to repent a little of her benevolence and missionary zeal.

"Youse don't know? Youse knows nothink. Wy, everybody knows old Snooze, wot sleeps on his beat, reg'lar every night; and we comes up, and shouts: 'Spector, bobby!' Ah, ef you could a seen him! 'Tis the jolliest go youse ever seed!"

And the boy giggled with uncontrollable laughter, almost choking himself with the food and the tea.

Miriam swiftly made up her mind that this should promptly end. She remained silent for a few minutes, revolving in her mind how far she could strain her principles, and conquer her disgust. The boy solved her dilemma by rising up and saying:—

"I guess I'll now make tracks fur home. Say, Miss, youse owes me 'arf a dollar!"

"For what?" said Miriam, in surprise.

"I guess I'll make it a dollar, though," said the boy, reflectively. "One 'arf dollar fur unlawful detention; and one 'arf dollar fur loss of waluable time at my purfession."

"Then you can earn a dollar a day?" asked Miriam.

"You are no object of compassion."

"Of wot?" said the boy.

"Of pity, of compassion!" said Miriam, beginning to feel some remorse about her newspaper article on "Street-Waifs."

"I don't know wot youse sayin'," said the boy. "But," he added, generously, "thim gollywogs was good — not 'arf as good as old Bett's—but I guess I'll leave youse off with 'arf a dollar."

Miriam was very near crying with vexation and disappointment.

"An' look 'ere," said the boy, "youse only got to say, ony toime as youse wants me, send Coy to me! and Coy will come."

"I'm just thinking," said Miriam, "what a mistake I made in not handing you over to the constable!"

"Fer wot?" said the boy, bridling up.

"For misdemeanour on the public streets," she said. "Now go! And never let me see your face again!"

Just a little surprised at such feminine firmness, the boy flew downstairs, and Miriam was left to purify the unclean atmosphere and make sundry reflections on the possibility of raising up the "submerged."

"After all," she reflected, and it was a wonderful effort after humility, "I may be wrong. Perhaps so great inequality does not exist in the world after all. Do the masses need elevation? Or are they quite satisfied to remain as they are? In all ages men have laboured for the resurrection of humanity; and humanity seems sinking deeper and deeper into its graves of degradation. It seems noble—this idea of universal regeneration. Is it possible? And," Miriam blushed with humility at the thought, "is it not Quixotic for a young girl to throw herself into such a contest, where brave men have been worsted?" But then a voice said:—

"Work onwards and upwards. The reward is not success. The laurel is not for triumph, but for effort, even if defeated."

Meanwhile she had her bread to earn, and she felt it was not quite ignoble to make money even whilst she thought she was benefiting humanity. But she had her dark hours, and who has not? dark hours when she felt she could not look back on the past without regret and

remorse, nor on her present with pleasure, nor on her future without misgiving. The old dreams of her home down by the sea, the thundering storms and tempests that lashed the old house at Glendarragh; the angry and tumultuous seas — the same seas sleeping in silence under the evening sunsets and canopied by the gorgeous drape of sunlit clouds, or wrapped into rippling silences beneath the glamour of summer moons; the cliffs, solemn and grand, fronting with the strength of adamant and the silence of eternity the fury of aggressive seas; summer days, when a soft veil of haze drew down on the sweet seas, and tempered the quivering air, and sheltered the aching eyes; autumn days, when the grey, melancholy clouds drew down and shaded with their subdued lights land and cliff and sea; the dark blots of the tarred boats silhouetted against the greys of sea and sky, and making the melancholy deeper and more luxurious; the gentle and imperceptible decay of nature in October, when the oaks in the valley began to change their foliage, and the background of the sea was mottled with red, and yellow, and pale-gold patches, flung from the palette of nature; above all, the quiet, humble fisher-folk, so far removed from the *Sturm und Drang* of existence, and, therefore, capable of living for love's own sake; and then — the dear old clergyman, so refined, so tender, so humble; and his strong, brave wife —

"Oh," said the lonely girl, as she sat at her dreary office-work and looked out on the wintry desolation that fronted her windows, "what evil fate drove me from that haven of happiness? What sin did I commit that I should be driven forth, like Hagar, into the desert to nurse the wretched babe of my own enthusiasm for an Idea?"

And the vision of the present, and the vistas of the future were not more pleasant than this sad retrospect. She did not shirk work; nay, she desired it; but she felt it was precarious. True, it was a vocation rather than a profession; but the most zealous apostle needs bread, and, in these days, men do not go forth on an apostolate

without scrip or staff. She had stipulated that she should not be interfered with — nay, that she should be absolutely alone during the intervals of her labour; and thus she was spared any possible friction with her brethren of the Press. But this added to her sense of loneliness and insecurity. For this latter feeling now became a constant source of anxiety. She had not been trained to uncertainties, nor had she ever learned that probability is the most that we can expect in this world. Her nervous temperament demanded security; and the future seemed to hold out no promise. She knew she was dependent for her subsistence on a whim. Most of the great masses of the employed in America and elsewhere know that also; but they have been brought up under grey, doubtful skies, and have learned to take no thought for the morrow. To the lonely girl, the morrow was always the doubtful day.

For several evenings after her experience with the street-waif, Miriam found her solitary lodgings more lonely. Degraded as the type was, it was still a piece of humanity; and this girl, who had enrolled herself in the cause of humanity, had found the abstraction tiresome, and yearned for a closer relation with the types whence she drew her inspirations. The memory, too, of the humble people amongst whom her childhood and youth were spent, made the lower classes dearer to her. She had no further acquaintance with her Press colleagues than business arrangements necessitated. She was one of those strange beings that yearned for, and spurned, fellowship with their kind; and which in turn alternately attracted and repelled everyone with whom they came in contact.

Nevertheless, her work went on. She walked the mighty City fearlessly, by night and day, saw its most repulsive aspects, saw also the glitter and glare that absorb and paralyse the mental and moral faculties of the inexperienced; and then gave little etchings in words, that bit like acids, and entranced the reading multitudes by the presentments of their own vices and follies that

she exhibited in the terrible mirror of truth. For, strange to say, there is nothing so entrancing to the human imagination than pictures of loathsome things. They make the just Pharisaical; they endorse by example the flagitiousness of the wicked.

Yet, her heart sickened under her work. She felt that a woman's mission was to console and bless, to lift up and strengthen and purify, not to lay bare human deformity or to probe too deeply into human infirmity. She thought that a lady-surgeon was an anomalous and unnatural thing; that the soul of woman is of too delicate a texture to be torn asunder by the sight of physical deformity. Yet, her own work was not the less indelicate, because she exposed moral ulcers. Realism is not for woman, who is called above all others to the pursuit of the ideal.

Hence, her conscience was troubled by her rejection of the little street-waif whom she had summarily expelled. She had a hope that he would come back again. Street boys are not sensitive, she thought; and the recollection of the fire and the meat-pies might bring him back, even though there were no gratitude towards herself.

XXXIV

EXPLANATIONS

MRS. IRETON sat in a deep, low arm-chair in the recesses of her bay-window, that faced the harbour, where the morning sun was now making golden dimples when the surface was fluted by the wind. A man-of-war, a guard-ship, lay, massive and heavy and immobile right in the midst of the narrow bight that separated Haul-bowline from the mainland; sundry little steam-yachts, with a pennant flying at the stern, shuttled to and fro between the guard-ship and the town; and just now, at the breakfast hour, the sound of music was wafted upwards from the deck of the battle-ship, whilst, in horrid rivalry, a black Italian brought his organ and monkey beneath the window. Mrs. Ireton was not in a mood to appreciate the music that stole upwards from either source. There had been another scene at breakfast, only a few minutes before.

For some time there had been a tacit understanding between Hugh Ireton and his mother that no further allusion should be made by either to Miss Lucas or her past history. There had been one most painful interchange of ideas on the subject on Hugh Ireton's return from Dublin, when his mother, triumphant and scornful, flung in his face the dread facts that had transpired about Miriam and her associates. And the woman had the victory. There was no gainsaying the fact that, however honourable her motives had been, Miriam Lucas had, by her pen, stimulated this outbreak of lawlessness in the City. Her articles on Socialism and Society were read, and shuddered at. But apart from that, there were the sad facts, that she appeared to have linked her own

destinies with those of a fanatical and dangerous class; and had thwarted every effort of her legal guardian to raise her to his own rank in society and save her from criminal and dangerous sympathies.

Hugh Ireton had to listen, with bowed head and angry face, to all this, poured out, a vitriolic stream, with all the suavity of good breeding — all the sadness of one who was so far removed above it, and only touched it because it was a melancholy duty, imposed by the wilful obstinacy of her son. Once or twice he had tried to interpose in Miriam's defence, only to find himself more thoroughly defeated. He had risen from table with the words: —

“Mother, if we are to remain together even during the short space that shall elapse before I secure my appointment, there must be a truce to this.”

To which his mother replied: —

“It is an unsavoury subject. It is no wish of mine to dwell upon it, except where duty obliges.”

Hence the matter was quietly avoided, although it originated and kept up that polite coolness that seems to exist in most families where there is one subject that has to be kept under lock and key in the sketelon-closet. Hugh Ireton knew that it was the daily, never-ending subject of those feminine conferences that take place over the tea-cups in the afternoon. But, as he never attended on these occasions, they did not interest him.

On this beautiful summer morning, however, the painful subject had suddenly cropped up in a letter which Miss Maud suddenly alluded to, making her own wise comments thereon. The letter had come the evening before from Ashley, and, amidst much nonsense and childish love-making, he wrote that he had news of the “Lady of the Lea” and that Maud was to tell her brother immediately. The brother did not seem much pleased or impressed by the information. He frowned on the child, who took his displeasure calmly enough. She had read out solemnly: —

“‘Tell your dear brother that there is a clue —’ What is a clue, Mamma?”

“A clue, child, is a — something you catch hold of to lead you — well, somewhere!”

“Oh, I see, Mamma. So when I catch Maysie’s hand, that’s a clue!”

“Well, ye-es, you know, not quite. Go on. Who’s this letter from?”

“From Arthur. He sends you all kind of love and greeting; and he says, tell your dear brother that there’s a clue to the — the — myst — myst — mystery of ‘The Lady of the Lea.’”

“And who might the ‘Lady of the Lea’ mean?” asked the mother, looking anxiously at her son.

“Some childish nonsense between Arthur and this young lady, I suppose,” said Hugh. “It’s a song Ashley used to sing when down here,” he went on rapidly, trying to drown the eager revelations of his troublesome sister — “something about

“‘She was young and she was fair,
The Lady of the Lea.

I suppose he has got her photograph for this young lady!”

“Why, don’t you know?” said Maud, her eyes wide open in surprise.

“I think Ashley ought to stop all this nonsense with Maud now. She is growing, and her little head is weak and silly enough already without being turned by these amorous epistles. Besides, little girls should be busy with their dolls, and picture books; and they should not be writing silly letters to grown-up men!”

Maud was staring at him with all her eyes.

“But don’t you know, Hughie? This isn’t about me at all. Arthur says there’s a clue —”

“Very good! Keep your clue, and let him keep it. If it leads you into sense-land out of nonsense-land, so much the better!”

"But this is about the 'Lady of the Lea,' Miss Lucas, you know!" blurted Maud; and she was surprised at the thunder that gathered on her brother's face.

"Miss Lucas?" repeated her mother, ominously. "Well, go on, Maudie, if I am not intruding on sacred precincts, perhaps you would tell us the clue!"

"'I have found the name of the rightful heir to the Glen — Glen — Glen —' here's a big, hard word," she said, holding the letter towards her brother.

He took the letter and looked over it. He flung it back, contemptuously and angrily.

"Glendarragh, I suppose!" he said.

"'Estate,'" continued Maud. "'That rascal, Holthsworth, had no more claim on it than you or I. Now, the trouble is to find the Lady herself. But I'm on the track, and will call you to aid me when necessary —'"

"Is that all?" said Hugh.

"That's all about you," said his sister. "There's a good deal more about me."

"Of course," said her brother, deeply mortified.

"You may go down and read it at your leisure," said her mother to Maud. "But send no reply until I shall have seen it."

And Maud, dimly conscious that there was something wrong somewhere, glanced anxiously at her brother, on whose face the thunder was still gathering, sidled humbly from her chair, and went out.

There was a painful pause. Hugh Ireton cut his bread into crumbs, and affected to eat. His mother busied herself, with some show of ostentation, about the teapot and cosy. Then she said: —

"So this wretched affair is not at an end?"

"It appears not," said Hugh, in a sulky manner.

"You are still interested in this girl?"

"Yes!" Then, after a pause, he added: "She is not interested in me."

"I suppose not!" said his mother, coldly. "I should say that a girl — a woman, whose associates are commu-

nards and dynamitards, would hardly care for decent acquaintances."

"How often have I to tell you, mother," he said, lifting his eyes for the first time, "that you are completely deceived about Miss Lucas? She feels she has been wronged, and is therefore embittered; but she has said and done nothing that could deserve such remarks."

"Then all the talk in Dublin meant nothing," replied his mother. "I am sure I may be deceived, but better heads than mine have decided that she is a lady with whom the less we have to say the better. Even Mrs. Crosthwaite —"

Her son looked at her inquiringly and anxiously.

"Even Mrs. Crosthwaite," pursued his mother, "who really sets at nought the manners and customs of good society in many of her actions, even Mrs. Crosthwaite has begun to fear that she has been wrong in her confidence in Miss Lucas."

"Did Mrs. Crosthwaite say so much?" queried Hugh, anxiously.

"Not to me," said his mother. "But I have it on excellent authority that she has ceased her interest in that girl."

"I hope you are mistaken, mother," said Hugh, who felt that if the good minister's wife had lost faith in the motherless and friendless girl, all was over. "That's a matter I must look into and be assured of."

"Then, you disregard my wishes!" said his mother, losing temper at the assumption that Mrs. Crosthwaite's judgment was placed before her own. "You attach much importance to this lady's ideas, and none to mine!"

"No, no, I didn't mean to imply that," said Hugh, hastily. "But you know, mother, you were always prejudiced against Miss Lucas."

"Justly, I believe," said his mother, tartly.

"Well, justly or unjustly — it makes no matter; but you were always prejudiced and Mrs. Crosthwaite was

her dearest and fastest friend. It follows that if Mrs. Crosthwaite has had reason to change her opinion, things are more serious than I thought."

"Far more serious!" said his mother. "But, then, young men must set up their weak judgments before that of experienced and impartial seniors. Let us end the discussion, however."

"I didn't originate it," said Hugh.

"Let us end the discussion," said his mother. "These little episodes are becoming a little too frequent of late; and they hardly help me! Suppose we agree to regard the subject as a forbidden one!"

"By all means," said her son, knowing right well that on the first opportunity his good mother would introduce it again.

Hence was Mrs. Ireton sad and melancholy this beautiful summer morning there in her low armchair in the deep recesses of the bay window above the sea. Her feminine vanity was piqued by the preference of her son for this half-outlawed girl; her maternal feelings were outraged, because he seemed to make so little of her judgment and to rely so much on his own misguided notions. And yet, above pique and disappointment, would come her solicitude for her boy, and her mother's anxiety lest, by some thoughtless sentiment, he might be led to imperil all his future prospects in life.

"If he could only secure this appointment," she thought, "and get decently married —"

Then she suddenly thought: —

"I wonder would Ellen Lester look this way?"

She sank into a brown study on the question of Hugh Ireton's future. Then she sighed deeply, and finally took up her peerage and read: —

"Sherle. — Sir Ralph, of Sherle Manor, Co. Kilkenny, J.P. and D.L. for the County Kilkenny. Born 1808, died 1878. Married Elizabeth, third daughter of Richard Charles Blount of Bloomfield, Herts."

Meanwhile, Hugh Ireton had sped to Cork, and a very

short interval found him closeted with Ashley in one of these detached villas that look down upon the silver Lee from the heights of Montenotte.

Ashley was still in his dressing gown, although he had breakfasted. He was smoking lazily, and lazily reading some wretched novel.

"Hallo!" he cried, as Ireton, breathless after mounting the hill, stood still gasping without speaking. "If you go on this way, Ireton, your heart will get badly affected; and you know it is badly affected enough at present. Sit down, and don't speak for five minutes."

"I came up about your message in Maudie's letter," said Ireton. "The little vixen blurted it all out; and I've had another scene with the mater."

"About the 'Lady of the Lea'?" said Ashley, lazily.

"Yes!"

"I thought you told me that subject was *tabu*?" said his friend.

"Yes, of course! But that's only in theory. It comes on as regularly as the influenza."

"I think I must break off my engagement to that charming child-goddess of yours. She is one to whom I could never confide marital secrets."

"Well, to come to business," said Ireton. "You have got a clue?"

"Well, yes. And the singular thing about the matter is, that what we were seeking through the labyrinthine mazes of the law, was under our eyes at any moment we were pleased to open them."

"You don't say so?"

"I have said so, *mon ami*," replied Ashley. "I think I have patched and pieced the whole affair together; and, although the joints don't fit smoothly as yet, it makes a fair picture enough."

"I am all ears," said his friend.

"It is not a question of auscultation," said Ashley. "Put up your stethoscope, my friend, and try use your reasoning faculties."

"For heaven's sake, Arthur, stop this infernal badi-nage, and let me hear what you have to say!"

"Well, to commence! Can you remember our dear friend Ian ever saying that Miss Lucas's mother was a Papist?"

"Yes, certainly. His mother taunted him with the horrible baseness more than once!"

"Very good. Now I have ascertained that this estate in and around Glendarragh (what a frightful name) was in the possession of an old Catholic family, on whom, by reason of their oppression and cruelty of their serfs, a frightful curse had come."

"Yes, yes!" said Ireton. "I remember hearing that doctor down in Sleepy Hollow say that the crows would never build in the trees around the house."

"That would be no curse, but a blessing," said his friend. "Do you remember hearing him say that no child would be born there, and that every owner would die a violent death?"

"Yes! I think that old doctor — whose place, by the way, I am now seeking —"

"And have no chance of obtaining," put in his friend.

"No matter! I shall try," said Ireton. "But I was saying that he mentioned something of the kind that day we went first to Sleepy Hollow!"

"Very good. Here, now, is one set of facts. The second is, that the secret of the disappearance of Miriam Lucas's mother — you see I am speaking too familiarly perhaps of the lady in your presence, but I am using legal phraseology — is connected in some way with her religion."

"How?" inquired Ireton.

"That I don't know as yet, but I hope to find out. By the way, would not the fact of the 'Lady of the Lea' turning out a full-blown Papist rather damp your ardour?"

"Miss Lucas is nothing of the kind," said Ireton. "But, look here, Arthur, that's all rot about differences of religion. We, Trinity men, are gone beyond all that."

"Of course," said Arthur, carelessly. "But what about our maters, and our sorors, and our grand-maters, who have not had the benefit of our enlightenment? They can make it unpleasant, I can tell you, just because they are so purblind."

"All I care for now is to see Miriam. I'm just off to Glendarragh to kill two birds with one stone — to try my chances of the dispensary; and to see Mrs. Crosthwaite. She'll throw light on the subject. By the way, the mater said that even they had dropped Miriam."

"Well, see for yourself," said his friend.

"By the way, I must call on the Parish Priest. He holds the key of the situation. What do you call them when you are speaking to them?"

"Oh, 'your honour' or 'your majesty,'" said Ashley. "Anything will do. Some of them are not bad fellows."

"I believe so. Well, *au revoir!* I'll write my luck!"

"Good. And I wish it. But what about the Curse?"

"The 'Curse' be damned!" said Ireton, departing.

XXXV

A DEFENCE AND ITS REWARD

HUGH IRETON, on leaving his friend, Ashley, had two immediate and urgent objects before him — the one, to secure, if he could, and he was determined to leave no stone unturned to accomplish his design, the position of medical officer at Glendarragh, now endeared to him by so many reasons; and the second, to ascertain from the good rector and his wife any possible tidings of Miriam, and to disabuse them of any misconception they might have formed about her Dublin associations or actions. He was a clever fellow, A1 in his profession. He had abundant means to start with, and set up a practice in the city, or he could have, quite easily, entered the Army or Navy, and with the assurance of rapid promotion. But no! He felt in some mysterious manner that this young girl's life, so weird, so strange, so romantic, was inextricably wound up in his; and that he had a mysterious mission to rescue her and place her in her rightful position as mistress at Glendarragh. He had now no doubt whatever that she was the legitimate owner of the place, and that Holthsworth, with the fell design of securing her hand by destroying her liberty, and placing her in a position of dependence, had pretended to a right over the place, which he did not actually possess. And then — Hugh Ireton thought, as he sped along in the train, or walked up and down solitary platforms waiting for a change of trains — then, with a position, not of emolument, but of honourable toil, and with Miriam Lucas as his wife, what would earth leave to be desired?

He dismissed the car that had taken him to within a half-mile of the rector's cottage, and walked along in deep

meditation. He had taken a detour of a mile or so, in order to get a glimpse of Glendarragh House. It looked wretched and ruined enough from the rear. Then he went round to the front, and examined the appearance of the building. It was very desolate. Broken windows, gaping apertures, open doors. It made him shudder. Then he ventured in. The thought of that blessed summer afternoon when he entered that hall for the first time, the chill that struck him, the lonely appearance of the place, and then the sudden brightness that shone from the apparition of this girl—all came back; but it filled him with melancholy forebodings.

He left the dismantled house immediately, and strode through the village and along the road that led to the Rectory. The rector and his wife were at home. His acquaintance with them was slight; but he had a friendly greeting. He briefly explained the object of his visit. In her own blunt, decisive fashion, Mrs. Crosthwaite said:—

“You haven’t the slightest chance of the dispensary, Mr. Ireton. It has always been held by a Roman Catholic doctor, and rightly, because the entire district is Roman Catholic. John might vote for you, as he is on the Dispensary Committee; but that is all.”

“That’s a bad job,” said Hugh Ireton. “I thought that the Committee professed to vote according to qualifications; and,” pulling out a printed document, “I think these are as good as may be expected.”

The rector, with his usual gentle urbanity, took the papers and read them.

“They are really excellent, my dear,” he said, handing them to his wife.

“Not worth the paper they’re written on,” said that matter-of-fact lady. “Don’t you know as well as I, John Crosthwaite, that this whole thing goes by influence? The candidate who can claim, or has secured the majority of the Committee, will be elected, and no one else. But, Mr. Ireton, what put this wretched Dispen-

sary in your head? You should start in Cork or Dublin."

A hot flush mounted to Hugh's forehead. How could he confess the attraction? He murmured something about retirement, opportunities for study, etc.

"And your mother?" persisted the lady. "Surely, she would never consent to your burying yourself down here?"

"There is a good deal, my dear, in what Mr. Ireton says," interposed the vicar. "There is a certain class of disposition that prefers study and peace and retirement to the bustle and emoluments of a great city."

"Quite so," said Mrs. Crosthwaite. "Like yourself, who refused the canonry of St. Luke's, never considering the feelings of your poor wife."

"My dear —" said the rector.

"But all this is not bringing us nearer to the point," said his wife. "The question is, has Mr. Ireton a chance of the dispensary; and, if he has, would it be desirable for himself to undertake it?"

"I cannot speak of my chances," said Hugh. "But if I get it, it would mean Heaven to me!"

Now that was a rather strong expression for a young man; and it was not lost on the shrewd intellect of the rector's wife.

She looked at him a long time without speaking, as if she were unravelling a puzzle, or trying to read his inmost thoughts. Then she smiled, and turned to her husband.

"What can be the attraction for Mr. Ireton in this place?" she said.

"Mr. Ireton is a student, my dear, like myself," said the rector. "He wants to pursue his studies here uninterrupted by the claims and demands of society; and some day he will make a great name."

"H'm," said Mrs. Crosthwaite. "You'd like to see our garden, Mr. Ireton. I must get you some tea. John, would you mind asking Maggie to have some tea when we return?"

"By all means, by all means, my dear," said the rector, "Shall we say in a quarter of an hour?"

"Exactly," said the good woman. "Come, Mr. Ireton, we'll look at the green-house first."

She entered the green-house with her guest, closed the door carefully to see that she was not followed, and instantly said:—

"You have some news of Miriam?"

"Yes," he said promptly, delighted at her happy way of freeing him from all embarrassment. "We, that is Ashley (you've heard of Ashley), has found that this whole property belongs to Miss Lucas; that Holthsworth has no claim whatsoever on it; and — and —"

"You want to make Miriam your wife?"

"Yes! but, please, Mrs. Crosthwaite, don't connect the two things. God is my witness that I have no design but Miss Lucas's happiness. From the day we met here by accident for the first time, I felt that her future and mine were in some strange way to be identified. Ashley didn't like her. She chilled him, he said. And I also felt some repulsion; but it was the repulsion of attraction. Her history, her loneliness, her sadness, made an impression upon me that cannot be blotted out, but seems to deepen with the years —"

"Then you and Miriam understand each other?" said the rector's wife.

"If you mean by understand," said Hugh Ireton, "that I have ever made a declaration, and that it has been accepted, I answer, No! I'm sure that Miss Lucas knows that I have a deep interest in her; but that is all."

"Then, why didn't you speak? Hadn't you abundant opportunities in Dublin?" asked Mrs. Crosthwaite.

"Quite the contrary," replied the young man. "We met but once or twice; once, by accident, and once I felt it a duty to call on her about some matter that interested her."

"I have been under the impression," said the rector's

wife, "that Miriam was in the habit of receiving periodical visits from Trinity men —"

"It must be that ruffian, Holthsworth, who spread that vile calumny," said the young man, in the white heat of indignation.

"No! I have had but little correspondence with that gentleman. It was from another source."

"Then it is a lie," said Hugh. "In fact, we dared not call upon her, because we were afraid of her; and Holthsworth, for his own ends, kept her locked up from every one, except a set of old psalm-singing tabby-cats —"

"You are profane," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, "and what is worse, you are ridiculous. Tabby-cats don't sing psalms."

Ireton laughed.

"You know what I mean," he said. "It was positive cruelty to keep that splendid young creature immured in his gilded cage, without a chance of seeing a bit of the glorious world outside. No wonder she acquired morbid tastes and ideas."

"Ah, yes, indeed," said Mrs. Crosthwaite musingly. "To think of our little dove, our Miriam, developing into such an anarchist —"

"Oh! please don't say that, Mrs. Crosthwaite," said Ireton in anguish. "Like the other story, there's not a word of truth in that. She simply wrote one or two things for a felonious paper in Dublin, probably, to amuse herself, or through a mistaken notion of helping the working classes; but I am fully empowered and authorised to tell you, that it was Miss Lucas, who by sheer courage and tact, averted a fearful riot and massacre in Dublin."

"Stop a moment," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, "John must hear this. Come and have some tea, and tell me all. But," she paused for a moment, "are you quite sure of what you say? Quite sure?"

"Absolutely," said Ireton. "You'll acquit Miss Lucas of everything, like disorder, or sympathy with disorder, when you hear the whole story."

"May God grant that we can also acquit ourselves of foolish suspicions. Or rather," she added, "may I be pardoned, for Mr. Crosthwaite was always loyal to her."

And so, over the tea-cups, Hugh Ireton gallantly retrieved the fair fame of Miss Miriam, going into each detail of her daily life in Dublin, her solitary hours, the tyranny of Holthsworth, his machinations against the unfortunate workmen on strike, his studied efforts to have his name connected with Miriam's in the narrow circles where he moved; his last attempt to provoke a riot, and Miriam's plan to defeat him. He told all simply, but with a certain warmth that was generous and becoming, John Crosthwaite beaming with delight at this generous defence and acquittal of his favourite, and his wife, with head bowed and humbled.

When he had concluded, the rector's wife said, and there were tears in her eyes; as she stretched out her hand, and grasped her husband's: —

"John Crosthwaite, I have often said there is a fool in this establishment, but it is not you, John!"

Instantly, the little party resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means — the only question now being, where was Miriam? and how was she to be brought back to her friends and adorers? They speculated, guessed, devised, doubted; and like so many other committees, ended by deferring the matter for future consideration, Mrs. Crosthwaite engaging to see old James Carroll for possible news about Anstie; and Ireton determined to seek Arthur Ashley again, in whose sagacity and judgment he had such perfect confidence.

Then, suddenly it dawned on them that they had completely forgotten the main object of Hugh Ireton's visit. The subject was discussed again; and again it was decided that his candidature for the Dispensary was a hopeless enterprise. Would he see the priest? he asked. Yes, of course, and be received with all possible courtesy; but,

the religious test was inevitable. There literally was no chance for Ireton there.

"But bring back Miriam at any hazard," said Mrs. Crosthwaite; "and, perhaps, all will be well."

"Yes!" said the young man, rather sadly and hopelessly, "that of course is the first thing. I shall let you know every step we take."

"God bless you!" said John Crosthwaite, and wrote at once in his diary:

"The eclipse of the sun, which has lasted so long to the infinite detriment of all animal and vegetable life, has lifted. The sun is shining out in all his splendour, only a few wisps of clouds still overshadowing his disc."

Mrs. Crosthwaite, with a woman's prophetic forebodings, seeing obstacles everywhere, even where they never could exist, walked with Hugh Ireton to the gate. At parting, she said:—

"You have no idea of what a load you have lifted from our spirits, Mr. Ireton. Just one word more! How will your mother take it? Does she suspect, or know?"

"Yes! She knows a little, and suspects a great deal," he replied. Then, after some hesitation: "We have had some scenes over the matter; but I don't mind. I have a great love for my mother, but I cannot accept her theories of things."

"And you are right," replied the rector's wife. "There can be no question of your duty towards your mother; but on the other hand, there can be no question of your loyalty towards your own principles."

"It's all this terrible exclusiveness," said Ireton, bitterly, "this rigid, and let me say, vulgar pride, that seems to exist amongst what we are pleased to call 'society.' There isn't a particle of Christian sentiment or feeling anywhere!"

"You may be right," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, reflectively, "but please remember, young man, that you are

not called upon to reform matters; nor could you, even if you would."

"I know that well, Mrs. Crosthwaite," he said. "I am not going to bruise my knuckles against that solid wall of prejudice; but that is just the reason why I am so anxious to get away from city life, with all its artificialities, and come down to a quiet place, like this."

"With such a life-companion as Miriam, of course?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite.

"Yes!" he said, with confidence. "That's my life-dream. May it come true!"

"I hope so," she said seriously. "You seem to deserve it. In any case, count on my co-operation and sympathy."

"A thousand thanks," he said gaily. "It is just what I expected of you."

He was going away; but turned back for a moment.

"And you think I had better abandon the idea of the dispensary?"

"I think you have no chance," she replied. "But faint heart never won fair lady."

"By Jove, I'll try!" he said.

He had gone away some distance, half-elated and half-depressed, and utterly uncertain how he was to proceed in his candidature for the dispensary, when he became aware, as he approached Glendarragh House, of a figure that seemed to be watching him intently. It was not a prepossessing figure, but seemed to be an ill-clad creature, half-groom, half-labourer, in very reduced circumstances. He seemed half-inclined, yet shy, to solicit notice from Ireton; but, as the latter approached nearer, there was an unmistakable look in the face of the man, and an unmistakable meaning in the gesture that touched his grizzled hair and shabby hat.

"Good-day!" said Ireton, shortly.

"Good-morrow, your 'anner!" said the man. "And may every luck attind yer 'anner wherever you go."

Ireton thought this the usual preliminary to another

appeal; but something in the appearance of the man made him hesitate to offer charity.

"You don't remimber me, yer 'anner?" said the man, after a pause, and with an attempt at a smile.

"I can't say I do," said Ireton. "Did I ever meet you before?"

"Oh, begor, you did, yer 'anner," said the man. "An' 'twas a lucky day for me I met you."

"How was that?" said Ireton, growing interested.

"Because," said the man, with the usual tendency of the Irish peasant to prolong the agony, "only for yer 'anner and Miss Miriam I'd be in my grave to-day."

The name of Miriam not only aroused Ireton's sympathetic attention, but gave a clue to the man's identity.

"You're not the man that cut himself?" he said.

"Begor, I am thin," said the other, with some pride in the distinction. "I'm Dwyer!"

"By Jove," said Ireton, "I'm glad to see you so well. That was a close shave, wasn't it?"

"Faith it was," said Dwyer, "only for Miss Miriam's handkecher, and yer 'anner's help, I'd be under the daisies to-day."

Ireton was moving away, when the man arrested him.

"Wisha, yer 'anner, an' have ye any news at all of Miss Miriam? Sure an' 'tis the lonesome place since she went from us."

"Well, yes! I have heard some news quite lately," said Ireton. "I know now, for certain, that this whole place and property are hers."

"*T'ainim an Dia*," said the man. "An' you don't say so? By Gor, but that will be the welcome news to the people. Sure, we always sushpected that that Dublin liar¹ had no call upon the place."

"No more than you!" said Ireton. "The thing is now to find Miss Lucas, and bring her back."

"Wisha, then, yer 'anner, av it were to walk across the

¹ Lawyer.

sea to find her, sure there are a hunderd min here that would venture it."

"Well, who knows?" said Ireton. "By the way, I'm thinking of comin' down here myself. Would you like me for another operation, Dwyer?"

"Faith, yer 'anner, I don't think I'll cut meself agen for the fun av it. But there's no man more welcome than you'd be here!"

"Why do you think that?" said Ireton, quite sure that this was the usual blarney of the natives.

"Why? Because we all knows that av any man can bring Miss Miriam back to us, it is yer 'anner!"

Utterly dumbfounded, Ireton's heart gave a great leap of hope at the words of the peasant. But he only said: —

"What reason have the people for thinking that?" he said.

"Begor, no rayson at all but the best of raysons," said Dwyer. "Sure we know all, yer 'anner, from Anstie Carroll, ould James's daughter, who's gone to Ameriky."

Then a great light dawned on Ireton's mind.

"Then you think I'd have a chance of the dispensary on that ground?"

"Faix, you wouldn't have a chance, but a sartinty of it," said Dwyer. "There's not a man on the Cummittity that wouldn't vote for you for Miss Miriam's sake."

"By Jove! I'll try my luck, then," said Ireton.

"Do, thin," said Dwyer, thankfully pocketing the coin Ireton proffered him. "Sure, they're all saying now that 'tis you will take away the '*Curse*'!"

XXXVI

A QUEST AND A RESCUE

WHENCE came the sudden and imperious impulse that led Miriam to seek her long-lost mother in the heart of the most intricate of modern cities, she did not know. She only knew that in some mysterious manner it was revealed to her that here — somewhere in the heart of this restless city — it might be in high places surrounded by ease and pomp; it might be in some degraded and debased environments — she was to seek, and be united to her mother. And, clearly, there was no means of making even an initial search except through the Press. She had thought of consulting some detective agencies, but then reflected that this meant grave expense, and a probability of failure; and just now her means were very low. She then thought of seeking out some Catholic priest, who might, perchance, have heard of her; but she dismissed that idea again as impracticable. In the vast population such as filled every artery and vein of this mighty city, it was foolish to dream of finding one individual by such means. At last, timidly, and after having torn up several copies, she drew up an advertisement, and posted it in the *New York Herald* for insertion. It seemed so hopeless a thing that, as she turned away from the pillar into which she had dropped the paper, she could not help smiling; and a rude fellow, passing by at the moment, said aloud: —

“Lucky feller!” At which a policeman smiled also; and Miriam, drawing down her veil, walked angrily away.

For many weary days Miriam waited and watched, scanning the long columns of notices and advertisements

for some indication that her quest was successful. Just as she had given up the search in despair, and had concluded that she dare not go to any further expense, a one-line notice caught her eye. It ran thus:—

“Miriam Lucas.—At last. Come to me. All will be well.”

It gave the address of an avenue and a street, very far from her residence, and of which she had never heard. The question then arose, what was now to be done? Should she accept the notice or not? In the first wild whirl of delight, she never balanced possibilities. There was the cry from the unknown mother, whose face she had all her life wished to see, whose voice would be music in her ears. She gave herself up to a reverie, dreaming of what this mother was likely to be. Would she appear old and feeble, worn out with sorrow and suffering; or young and buoyant, ruling, queenlike, over some fine household, her grey hair smoothed down under her matron's cap, and her white hands glistening with costly rings? Yes! That was the picture that was finally accepted by the girl's imagination. She rejected everything else, not only as sordid, but as unbecoming.

Then little whispered warnings began to rise and speak to her reason. Take care! This may be a trap, a city ruse in a city of intrigue and horror, with vast terrible consequences arising from it, that made her shudder and grow cold with apprehension and disgust. Yet, whither was she to turn? She knew no one in the City. She felt it was one of those sudden crises when she should have to depend absolutely on her own judgment, or fail utterly. And then the old spirit of self-reliance, of lofty pride in herself, and the assurance that there could be no danger where there was no fault, led her to determine to run a certain risk rather than fail utterly. Only one thing she deemed to be prudent. She would wait to see if that message were repeated, or put in different language, and then decide. The invitation was repeated, and more urgently than before.

Meanwhile, Coyote had not forgotten the meat-pies and the tea and the eyes that had hypnotised him there in the snowy street.

"Well, you've come back?" said Miriam. "I thought you had given me up as you did not get that half-dollar."

Coyote looked down at his bare feet, and shuffled them over the carpet. He was embarrassed, quite a novel experience with him.

"Well, never mind," said Miriam. "We'll make it up. Do you know this place?" And she gave the address that had appeared on the newspaper.

Coyote at once recovered himself, opened his mouth wide, and put on an ambiguous smile.

"I guess 'tis out o' my beat," he said, "but I guess 'tis a swelly place. Rummy though!"

Miriam's heart jumped at the word "swelly." Clearly, her mother was moving in aristocratic circles.

"What is 'rummy,' Coy?" she asked.

"Wal, you see," said Coyote, looking all round the room, up at the ceiling and down at the floor, as if seeking an inspiration everywhere. "'Rummy' means, you know, 'We won't go home until mawrnin',' and: 'How are, ole fel'.'"

And Coyote imitated to perfection the voice and demeanour of a drunken gentleman.

"Coy, you're simply disgusting," said Miriam. "Tell me plainly, is it an aristocratic quarter, or a mean quarter in the City?"

"Wy," said Coyote, "'tis the toniest place in the hull city. But ye'll want a hescort, Miss. Take me!"

"I'll think it over," she said. "Perhaps. We'll see."

But she finally decided to take no escort. This first interview with her mother should be strictly private. No one should witness it. It would be too sacred.

She dressed herself with unusual care for the occasion, for she had decided that her mother was living in high social circles, and should not in any way be made ashamed of the relation she was claiming. For the same reason

she determined to call at a society hour, and not in the morning.

The short winter day was drawing rapidly to its close when she left her humble lodgings and stepped out into the mazes of the great City. She had not the remotest idea of where the place of appointment was. Coyote had mentioned accidentally that it was an avenue leading to the river, and that was all. She came opposite a cabstand and beckoned. The man was instantly by her side. She took out the newspaper cutting and read the address. Then, a little timidly, she asked:—

“It is a highly respectable locality, is it not?”

“Wal, yes,” he said, “none but tony people go there.”

This satisfied all Miriam’s lingering doubts, and she sat back in the cab, watching the electric lights in the shops and in the streets, and the crowds that were impatiently sweeping by, and which seemed to engorge the narrow passages where the avenues narrowed into streets. The evening, or rather night, was bitterly cold; and although she was warmly clad, Miriam shivered, but thought it was rather from the excitement and apprehension of the interview than from cold. The progress of the cab seemed to be slow, the journey interminable. Sometimes, when they came into open streets where fashionable people dwelt, the driver urged his horse rapidly over the wooden pavement; but in the narrow, congested quarters, where the crowds were hurrying on business, he had to creep slowly. After an hour’s driving, Miriam looked at her watch, and saw that it was six o’clock. She grew impatient. These people — she meant her mother, would be soon dressing for dinner; and it would be most awkward to intrude. She was dreaming of the long-lost mother as the centre of a brilliant circle of society; picturing the great brownstone or stuccoed front, the wide sweep of steps to the hall-door, the liveried footmen, the drawing-door flung open, the majestic vista of rooms opening into each other, and reduplicated in vast mirrors that filled inter-window spaces on every side; the rare and

costly furniture; the books, and vases, and *bric-a-brac*; and then — the soft gliding over thick carpets of some queenly woman, whose every gesture denoted refinement and the ease of great wealth; and then — the half-suppressed “At last!” Oh, it was beautiful, as all dreams of youth, sanguine, painted on rose-coloured clouds with pencils dipped in gold and scarlet colours and drawn into every picturesque and noble outline by the fingers of youthful and dreaming fancy.

They had gradually cantered out of the ruck and roar of some crowded streets into a broad, smooth avenue, over whose asphalt pavements the tyres of the cab seemed to roll noiselessly; and Miriam drew herself together for she thought that here was her destination. She scanned with eager solicitude the fronts of the splendid mansions that filled each side, and wondered whether it was here or there, before that stately and well-lighted palace, or before that dark and magnificent house that seemed to shroud its splendours in reticent obscurity, he was to stop. She woke up from her dream to find the horse cantering down a by-street; and in a second he stopped, and the driver, alighting, threw open the door. The street was quite dark and deserted with apparently blank walls on either side. Only a few yards off were the broad spaces brilliantly lighted of the stately and fashionable avenue through which they had just passed, but here all was dark — darker even down the street where it clearly sloped to the river, across whose broad and dark expanses the electric arcs from the other side were flickering faintly.

Miriam hesitated for a moment; and then asked: —

“Can this be the address?”

“Yes, Miss,” said the driver, respectfully. “’Tis the address you gave me. Here is the number.” And he pointed to a dark blue number on a white shield near the door.

Then Miriam instantly concluded that this was the private entrance to that palace near the corner; and with

her old pride, disdaining to ask questions that might reveal her timidity, she paid the driver and dismissed him.

"Shall I wait, or call again?" he asked.

But Miriam, quite confident that this was now her future home, and that she should in future roll in carriages and not in hired cabs, said No, she would not require his services again. He seemed to hesitate, as if about to say something, but finally got on his perch and drove away. There was not one soul in the dark and dreary street, and as the sound of the cab-wheels on the pavement died slowly away, Miriam shuddered a little, and then pulled the bell. There was no immediate answer; and Miriam concluded the family were at dinner, and the servants occupied. Then she noticed an electric bell and touched it. In a few seconds a young footman appeared, dressed just as Miriam had dreamed, and she entered a narrow corridor, dimly lighted with shaded electric lamps, and furnished with costly elegance.

"Tell your mistress," she said, "that Miss Lucas, Miss Miriam Lucas, is here."

The man stared, and then seemed to smile, which made Miriam a little indignant; but he led her along the corridor to a glass door which he flung open, and ushered her into a large and lofty hexagonal apartment, furnished with luxury, but not, as Miriam deemed, with much taste. But it appeared to be so filled with plants and flowers that it seemed rather a conservatory than a drawingroom; and at least it realised one condition of her dreams for each side was a vast mirror; and on turning around Miriam noticed to her surprise and slight alarm that she could not tell at which side she had entered. Yet, tired and feverish, she sank into an ottoman. Then, in some strange manner, a drowsy but delightful feeling crept over her, and she had sunk into a delicious slumber when she was suddenly aroused by a rough hand on her shoulder, and a voice, lowered to a whisper, but tremulous with alarm:—

"Miss Miriam! Miss Miriam! Wake up! wake up! Oh, my God!"

Instantly, though she felt it difficult to shake off her somnolence, Miriam woke; and the sudden alarm sent heart-beat after heart-beat to the brain. She started up from the deep luxurious ottoman, and saw, looking at her with eyes distended in terror, her former servant, Anstie Carroll.

For a moment she did not recognise her, the little creature was dressed out in such pretty gewgaws, and her neck and arms were bare. Then, the girl anticipated and said:—

"Great God in Heaven, Miss Miriam, what brought you here?"

Now thoroughly alarmed, Miriam could only stammer:—

"Here? Why I came to meet my mother. She advertised for me. What is it? What am I? And are you Anstie?"

She had shown the girl the little newspaper slip. Anstie glanced at it and fell to weeping.

"What do you mean, Anstie? What is this place?"

The word seemed to penetrate the girl like an electric shock. Then she suddenly grew erect and strong.

"Come, Miss Miriam," she cried, fumbling in her pockets for a key. "And come quietly as you value your life."

She drew the trembling Miriam over to one of the large mirrors. And there Miriam saw her own white face, and the wretched finery of the girl who was now apparently to save her from something horrible. Anstie put a key into the panel of the mirror, and swung back the heavy door of which it formed a part. She glided through, dragging Miriam after her, along a corridor similar to that by which she had entered, but much narrower. At the end, she opened another door, and the fresh gust of outer air swept in and chilled them. They were standing on steps which were washed by the dark waves of the river that lapped beneath. The silent

terror of the whole thing, so utterly different to what she had been fondly anticipating, almost paralysed the faculties of Miriam. She was speechless. She could only obey. She stood staring like one in a dream across the dark river, where nothing was discernible but the lights that fell from the quays, and were broken into ripples of gold upon the waters. Not so Anstie. Shivering in her thin dress, and with chattering teeth, she drew from her belt a whistle such as boatswains use. She first blew it softly as if to catch the attention of some one near at hand. Then, finding no response, she blew a sharp, rattling note; and presently the sound of oars was heard, and a boat, with one single occupant, glided beneath the steps.

"Is that you, Owen?" she whispered.

"'Tis, Miss," came the answer, in an unmistakable Irish brogue.

"I'm glad of it," said Anstie. "Because, Owen, I know I can trust you."

"Av coorse, Miss!"

"I want you to take this lady — and she is a real lady, not one of us — to the nearest slip, and get the safest cab you can find to take her home."

"All right, Miss," came the voice.

Anstie gently motioned Miriam to descend; but Miriam as positively refused, unless the girl came with her.

"I won't go without you, Anstie," she said. "I don't understand it all, but you must come."

Anstie came closer and whispered in an agitated tone: —

"Miss Miriam, 'tis no time for codraulin' or arguin'. Your life is in danger, and so is mine. Be said by me, and go. If you're safe, I'll feel that I have done one good thing in my life, that may save my sowl from hell!"

"But, but, my mother — she sent for me — oh! how can I bear the disappointment?" wept Miriam.

Anstie drew the door to softly behind her, so as to cut off all view of them from the house, and although the

wretched girl was shivering in the deadly cold of that winter night, she still urged Miriam to instant flight.

"Your mother is not here, Miss Miriam," she said. "You fell into a trap. Beware of these newspaper notices. And listen!"

Miriam paused.

"Go nowhere, and see no one in this dreadful city without first advising with a priest. You're not wan of us; but 'tis all the same. Take care, Owen! And, as you value your life, do what I've tould you!"

"'Tis all right, Miss," said Owen, leaning one hand on the steps, and pushing out his boat into the river.

For a long time Miriam was too bewildered and too frightened to speak. The whole adventure was so sudden and so fearful, and it broke up her sanguine dreams so sadly, that she was speechless and could hardly collect her thoughts. She felt only that she was being speedily borne with the current through the darkness. She could not discern the boatman's face. She heard the soft plunge of the oars, and the jerk that carried them forward, and saw the lights at the other side racing through the dark and sombre night.

At length, the intensity of the cold woke her up to consciousness, and she drew her furs around her and shivered. Then she whispered through the darkness: —

"You're an Irishman, are you not?"

"Begor, I am, Miss. You've guessed right this time."

"Tell me," she said, with a certain peremptoriness, "what place is that?"

"Ax me somethin' aisier, Miss," said the voice. "Shure what do I know?"

"Oh, I see," said Miriam, not willing to distrust him. "I thought you might have known."

This confidence disarmed the man, and he said: —

"I believe 'tis a place of amusement, where people do be amusin' theirselves."

"Oh, I see," said Miriam, half relieved, "'tis a theatre or a music-hall."

"Exactly, Miss," said the voice, with a certain emphasis. "'Tis a theayter, as you say, where the divil is the chief play-actor; and 'tis a music-hall, where the same gentleman plays the first fiddle. But here we are, Miss! Now, take care! Them steps are shlippery wid the frost. Put your fut there, look. And gi' me yer hand!"

She put her little gloved hand in his great rough palm, and ascended the slippery steps that glistened in the light of the solitary lamp overhead. He then whistled for a cab, which soon came rattling up. He gave a sharp, searching look at the driver; but, instantly recognising him, his face unclouded itself.

"Sharp night, Tim," he said.

"Sharp night," said Tim.

That was all. For Owen, opening the cab-door with the courtesy of a gentleman, ushered Miriam in.

"Where to, Miss?" he whispered.

And Miriam, dissolved in tears, told him her address.

"You're all right now, Miss," he said, confidentially. "Tim is one of ourselves."

Miriam thanked him; and just as he was about to turn up, she laid her hand on his arm.

"I knew that young girl that called you," she said. "She was my maid in Dublin; and I knew her father in her native village. Could you think of any way of getting her away from that—that theatre, and let her come to me?"

The man shook his head sadly.

"I fear not, Miss," he said. "I tried before now, and failed. All I can do is, to get her the priest before she dies."

And Miriam sank back in the cab, appalled at the thought; and then she reflected on her own imprudence in yielding to the impulse of obeying an anonymous line in a public journal.

"Yes!" she thought. "Life is surrounded by dangers. But what wild beasts men can become!"

Her room looked lonely and bare when she returned. It contrasted so terribly with all she had dreamed and hoped for, that its poverty, hitherto bearable, became now intolerable, accentuated as it was by comparison with the fairy visions her imagination had conjured up.

XXXVII

BAFFLED AGAIN

HOLTHSWORTH sat in his library chair, thinking. And he was thinking of the past, with certain regrets, but without remorse; and he was thinking of the present, with satisfaction; and he was thinking of the future with that pleasing sensation that comes from the certainty of victory. Although in the meridian of life, and somewhat more, his was not one of those dispositions that covets peace. He was a fighting man — one of those restless and perturbed spirits that finds pleasure only in action, especially if there is an element of hostility in it. He could not brook defeat. And he had been defeated. He had been defeated by Miriam Lucas; but there was the satisfaction that the victory had cost her dearly. He had been defeated by his own men on the railway strike. But he had humbled them, and brought them and their families to the verge of starvation. They would not revolt again. Therefore, on the whole, he had hitherto fared well. There was another struggle before him — with those recalcitrant tenants down at Glendarragh. He entered on the struggle with a certain kind of elation. It was property, property, property against combinations and communism and socialism. And down there by the wild sea coast, there were none of those dangerous possibilities that had arisen, and might always arise, from city associations. They were a handful of poor, ignorant peasants. He would easily intimidate them, when he took up the matter in grim earnest. They had been hitherto defiant, because he had seemed to hesitate. He would now show the iron hand. If they cowered beneath it, all would be well. If they resisted, he would sweep

them off the face of the earth; and come safe back to civilisation. He knew the law and its intricacies. He was sure of success in either case. If he succeeded in extracting their rents, well and good. He would rebuild Glendarragh, and live there in the pleasant summer time, when the city became stuffy and disagreeable. He would keep his yacht, and go around the coast at leisure, dipping here and there into little harbour nooks, or lazily fishing for nothing in particular, only to while away the long summer evenings, or the happy autumn afternoons. And he would bring down his Club friends, just to show them the aborigines, and to break their city hearts with visions of such idyllic peace and languor. Only if Miriam! — but that dream is passed. Let it pass! Life is nearly full of such disappointments; but when the residue — are there not glorious reprisals to be wrested from Fortune, splendid reserves which the fickle jade dare not see or touch?

He called on his agent — a solicitor living away far down some alley which they still called a street. He found him in his dingy office, with its dirty windows looking at a blank, bare wall not three feet away; and its office furniture of a few grimy desks, a bookcase, with its yellow, calf-bound Law Books, a couple of high stools, and the usual complement of lazy clerks. These brisked up and drew themselves together, and looked attentive, as the great man passed them; and then relapsed into idle conjectures about his visit, its purport, his history, etc.

“The old cock came out of that fight well,” said one.

“He had his comb badly broken,” chimed in another.

“But why didn’t he go against Greevy? Wasn’t that the fellow’s name?”

“Didn’t you hear? There was a girl in the case. There always is, from the slicing and eating of an apple to a railway strike and murder. And our friend is a pious man. He does not like creating a scandal.”

“These pious fellows are the devil incarnate. They

can do anything and make it appear nothing. I think I'll turn pious and godly myself."

"You'd be soon found out!"

"What matter if I can escape? Don't you remember Uriah Heep?"

"He didn't escape!"

"Well then, Holthsworth?"

"Wait to see the end. 'Sh!"

The great man had come out from the dingy office. He did not smile, but he said "Good-afternoon!" to the clerks. He was not quite pleased with the interview. The lawyer, knowing somewhat more of the country and its aborigines than his client, recommended caution and compromise.

"You don't know these scoundrels," he said. "They'll club together, and combine, and defeat you."

Defeat! The word was a blasphemy in Holthsworth's ears. He threw back his head, and sniffed the battle afar off.

"Defeat? There can be no question of defeat in the matter. See! we have brought these strikers to their knees here, although they were backed up by English gold. Surely it is easier to break up a combination of illiterate peasants —"

"Ah! It is the illiteracy that makes them so dangerous," said the lawyer. "They have no imaginations; and they cannot see beyond the day."

"How does that affect the matter?" asked Holthsworth.

"Don't you see that a people who cannot fancy the future, or imagine the consequences of their rebellion, must be hard to deal with. The soldier who 'thinks of things' is a bad fighter."

"But, supposing that they can be made to 'think of things'?" said Holthsworth.

"Then, that will alter the question!" said his adviser. "But, you know, fighting comes after diplomacy. We'll try all arts before the art of war."

"What do you propose, then?" said Holthsworth, impatiently. He did not like these delays.

"I'd advise you go down at once to that unnameable place; get up a few Gaelic phrases; see the parish priest; summon the tenants; boldly assert your proprietorship; tell them Miss Lucas is gone, never to return; and that, in any case, you, being legal guardian, are entitled to sue for rents; demand full amount, all arrears to be paid up promptly. They'll refuse. You hold out sternly. Threaten eviction, etc. Parish priest intervenes. You listen, sulkily. Then, in compliment to his Reverence, and *without prejudice, without prejudice*, do you mind, you consent to throw off a year's, or half-year's arrears. They demur. You insist. They grow angry. You take your hat to leave. Again, parish priest intervenes. You cannot accept his Reverence's proposal. Mortgages, rent-charges on the estate, etc. In fact, the rental not at all equal to mortgages and annual charges! Meeting threatens to break up. Parish priest again intervenes. He is one of those men who 'think of things.' You demur. It is not your own interest you seek but Miss Lucas's. You have nothing to gain. And then, there are mortgagees, ladies of birth, reduced to extreme poverty, etc. They are obstinate, smiling at your assertions with an ignorant, incredulous smile. You invite them to make an offer. You tell them that there are five and six years' arrears accumulated. They make the offer — To pay nothing, and get a clear receipt; and half rents in future. The parish priest gets ashamed and loses temper, and tells them they're a pack of d—d schemers. This improves them. They offer half a year's rent down, if all arrears are wiped out. They won't go beyond that —"

"But I will!" interrupted Holthsworth, in a temper. "I'll sweep the whole vile brood into the sea!"

"That means trouble, expense, unpopularity," said the lawyer, whose coolness was exasperating Holthsworth. "And then — no man will take that land for ever; and —"

"Go on!" said Holthsworth, sternly.

"Well, you know, Mr. Holthsworth," said the man of law, dropping his sarcasm, and taking a tone of genuine

commiseration, "you are a wealthy man, and you don't care. But Miss Lucas is poor. She has only that piece of land and that house."

He wouldn't have said so much if he had read the gleam of pride in Holthsworth's eyes. Why here was the very thing he desired.

"You may leave Miss Lucas's interests in my hands," he said. "I am her nearest relative, and her guardian, and her father's agent. Trust me, I shall see that Miss Lucas is not wronged by these hinds. They shall pay her the last farthing, I swear it. But I shall accept your advice. I'll go down and see the place again. But be ready with those writs. They may be needful."

"Very good!" he said. "In whose name shall I issue them? You know all!"

"Issue still in Miss Lucas's name," said Holthsworth, sullenly. "The former demands were made in her name, were they not?"

"Yes!" said the solicitor. "But go down. You will learn many things that you can never know by letter."

"On second thoughts," said Holthsworth, "issue the notices in my name. It will bring these fellows to their senses sooner."

And he went down, having previously written the parish priest to convene a meeting on such a day and at such an hour.

It was unfortunate both for the tenantry and for Holthsworth that the day when he visited Glendarragh was one of those delicious days which, even in summer, do not often favour our green isle, so fickle and uncertain is the weather. As he drove along from the station his quick eye took in at a glance the vast fields of waving corn — wheat yellowing under the summer sun; fields of oats, tossing their tasseled tops in the air, and the bearded and fringed barley, with its bristles erect and rigid. The potato-fields were more like flower gardens than vegetable plots, so pretty were the white and pink blossoms,

arranged, too, in alternate rows or drills, as if by design; and the dark green of turnip and mangold contrasted with the greys and yellows of haystacks, which seemed to have grown from the meadows, where the fresh green grass was already sprouting. Far above, the great dome of azure was ringing with the song of larks; the merry rattle of the hay-mower came from near and far-off, broken only by the shriller music of cornrake or landrail, as they were driven in to the ever narrowing square of the meadows by the mower; and, once or twice, Holthsworth thought he heard the mocking cry of the cuckoo, coming from the left-hand side of the road — a presentiment of coming evil, which, however, did not trouble his equanimity. Then, on a sudden bend of the road, a vast triangle of the deepest blue, with transverted base, seemed to be painted across the pale azure of the sky; and Holthsworth felt, with a certain legitimate pride, that all this was his, now and for ever more.

He had so timed his visit that the tenantry were assembled in the school-room of the village when he arrived. He called, as a matter of courtesy, at the house of the village pastor, was informed that he was down at the school with his people, and he went directly thither. As he passed Glendarragh House, "Desolation" seemed to be marked across its fine frontage. He shuddered, and turned aside.

He was received in solemn silence. The tenants, numbering about fifty or sixty, were assembled in the rude desks, where the children sat during school-hours. No one rose when he entered, but the parish priest came forward to greet him. A few words passed between them, and Holthsworth stood up to speak.

He spoke fluently and freely, in a well-ordered and temperate way, pointing out the fact that arrears extending over some years were due; that calls had to be met on the revenues of the estate, that it was heavily mortgaged, etc. He appealed to their sense of justice and the eternal fitness of things; and expressed a hope that

all would now be well, and that there should arise no necessity to have recourse to legal measures.

He sat down, confident that he had made a great impression. The audience was as quiet as if they were in church; and they appeared to listen, not only with attention, but with sympathy. Alas! how often has that apparent meek acquiescence deceived more sagacious thinkers than Holthsworth.

For, now, a little wizened old creature fumbled in his breast-pocket and drew out the frayed notice he had received from the Dublin notary.

"This," he said, holding it up, "is a notice for rent. It is signed Holthsworth, or issued in your name."

"Yes!" said Holthsworth, airily.

"Thin we take it, you are the raal owner of Glendarragh?"

"I am the legal trustee and representative of the landlords of the estate," he said.

"An' who may thim be?" asked the farmer.

"That's a matter of no consequence just now," said Holthsworth. "I tell you I am legal trustee, and am therefore empowered by law to press my claim for rents."

"There must be some great saycret about the matther entirely," said the farmer, "whin you won't tell us who the owner is."

"My dear friend," said Holthsworth, soothingly, "you have only to consider the legal aspects of the question. So long as you are safeguarded from all responsibility, what difference does it make to you who is the legal owner?"

"Thru for you!" said the farmer, turning around and winking at his associates. "But the law in Ireland is a mighty quare thing entirely; and shure it would be the devil's own job if Miss Lucas turned up to-morrow or next day and claimed our rents agin."

"I'll guarantee that Miss Lucas will do nothing of the kind," said Holthsworth, whose temper was getting a

little frayed in the combat. "If that is all you require to soothe your conscience, it is easily settled."

"Begor, 'tish't our conscience that's troubling us," said the farmer. "If there wasn't somethin' else besides our conscience, we'd have aisy minds enough."

"Wouldn't yer 'anner bring us a line or two from Miss Lucas," said a wag, who knew, as only an Irish peasant knows, all the intricacies of the situation, "to say that we are to pay you, an' nobody else?"

"That's quite impossible, quite impossible," said Holthsworth, testily. "I tell you again that if you pay your rents, I shall hold you quite immune from all further trouble."

"Where's the impossible?" said the farmer. "Sure isn't Miss Lucas safe and sound in yer 'anner's house in Dublin?"

"That's neither here nor there," said Holthsworth, angrily. "There's no use in wasting time nor language about the matter further. Will you pay your rents, or will you not?"

"As for time," replied the farmer, with a long drawl and an affected yawn, "sure there's no hurry at all, at all. The evening is airy. An' as for language, sure 'tish't often we haves the pleasure of conversing with such a civil gintleman, like yer 'anner."

Holthsworth was looking at the man in a puzzled way. He couldn't make out whether the man was serious or ironical. The faces of the others were as blank as that of the Sphinx. Their only apprehension was that the fun might terminate too soon; and they wanted to make an evening of it.

Holthsworth turned around and whispered something to the parish priest. The latter shook his head.

"Sure if it is the way ye wants to go to Confession to his Riverence," said the first speaker, with a grin, "we'll lave ye thegither. It wouldn't be right for us to be present. But, from the way he shook his head, I'm afraid his Riverence has put ye off."¹

¹ Deferred absolution.

Here, for the first time, there was a loud roar of laughter. Holthsworth took up his hat.

"Very good, my men," he said. "Perhaps you heard the saying, 'He laughs best who laughs last!' You may be laughing at the other side of the mouth when you see me again. Good-evening!"

"Wisha, good-bye, and good luck, yer 'anner," said another of the audience. "Sure we know what you mane well. The next time you kem down, 'twill be to take up Glendarragh, with Miss Miriam at your side, to lift the 'Curse.'"

Holthsworth scowled fiercely at the speaker, and strode from the room.

The meeting was over much sooner than he expected, or they desired. He was to dine at the rectory at seven o'clock, and there were three hours yet to that time. He went down to the beach to think over matters, and smooth his ruffled plumage before dinner.

The tide was in, and there was a fuller swell and heavier waves on the beach than was to be expected on such a glorious and placid afternoon. He sat on the sea-wall, thinking; but after a little while, his impetuous spirit, excited by the events of the afternoon, became impatient of such quiet indolence, and the sea was tempting. He thought he should like to feel by anticipation the delights of yachting in those halcyon days that lay before him like a dream. He made inquiries, and strolled leisurely over to Dave Ahern's cottage. The old men were smoking or sleeping over the fire. Declan was mending nets. All started at the apparition of the strange gentleman, as his form blocked up the half door and hid the sunlight.

"Can I have a boat for a couple of hours?" he asked peremptorily.

"Av coorse ye can, yer 'anner," said old Dave Ahern, rising and removing the short clay pipe from his mouth.

"How much an hour?" Holthsworth asked.

"Wisha, we'll lave that to yer 'anner," said the old man in the usual Celtic formula.

"No! No!" said Holthsworth, "that won't do! I don't do business in that fashion."

"Well, as yer 'anner is so pertickler," said Dave Ahern, "would you consider a couple of shillings an hour too much?"

"All right," said Holthsworth. "I want a man to row, you know — a strong man. This, your son?"

"'Tis, yer 'anner," said the old man. "Drap thim nets, Deck, and git out the oars."

The boy obeyed, apparently in a surly manner.

"By the way," said Holthsworth, "I had a young girl from this place in my service in Dublin — Carroll — Anstie Carroll. Do you know anything of her?"

"That's her father!" said Dave Ahern, casting an anxious glance at his son.

"Oh!" said Holthsworth, "and have you heard of your daughter lately?"

He addressed old James Carroll, who had risen wearily from his sugan chair near the fire.

"Nothing!" said the old man. "Nothin' at all, sence she wint across the says. May God reward thim that put an evil hand on my child!"

"Well, you know," said Holthsworth, "the girl was a little giddy and frivolous. She put her eyes on a young groom of mine—"

"I think Deck is ready, yer 'anner," said Dave Ahern, interrupting. "I'll go down and lend a hand in launching the boat."

Silent, but revolving dreadful things in his diseased mind, the boy went forward, the oars slung on his strong shoulders, and the rudder with its ropes in one hand. Silent, he raised the boat from its sand-bed, and with his father's help, pushed it forward into the tide. There he held it, whilst his father and Holthsworth clambered in. He then took the bow oar, so that his father being between himself and Holthsworth, he could well observe the latter.

They pulled straight to sea, across the glittering band

of sunlight that lay upon the calm waters. Holthsworth gave himself up to a reverie. He dreamed of his yacht, of its white, tall sails, a cloud of radiance against the sky, of its red pennant fluttering in the wind, of the strong, steeled keel leaning over and cutting the waves, and tossing the furrows right and left as they swept behind her rudder. And he thought if Miriam were there, the queen of this little paradise, leaning back there on the luxurious deck, her little hand toying with the hissing sea —

"How long since Miss Lucas left this place?" he suddenly asked.

"I suppose it must be three or four years," said Dave Ahern.

"And do you think she'll come back?" he asked.

"Sure he must, yer 'anner," was the answer, "to lift the 'Curse.'"

"Then you good people believe in that dreary old legend?" Holthsworth said.

"Some do and some don't," was the reply.

When they had been out half an hour or so, Holthsworth looked at his watch, and expressed his desire to return. The men promptly turned the boat around and pulled for home.

The long line of rock-bound coast was now before them, broken only by the little bay in which the village nestled. The white houses of the latter and the long sea-wall made a pretty break on the green of the fields and the browns and reds of the cliffs. And, far up along the village, the broad front of Glendarragh seemed to shine in the evening sun, no traces of its decay and dilapidation being visible from the sea. Holthsworth watched it long and earnestly. Yes! it was a pretty place — a little rural paradise, far away from the tumult and noise, the dust and the fœtor of cities.

He lightly jumped ashore, paid the fisherman, and drew the boy aside.

"You're a silent lad," he said, slipping some coin into the boy's rough palm. "I want you to do me a favour."

Declan held down his head.

"Can you write?" said Holthsworth.

"A little," said Deck, sullenly.

"Well, what I want you to do is this. Miss Lucas, and possibly Anstie Carroll, the girl you know of whom I spoke in the house, may return here — one or both. I have some interest in them, and what I want you to do is this: The moment either reaches the village, you will write to me — I'll leave you my address — and simply say on a postcard, 'Arrived!' That is all. Stay! I'll do the thing myself!"

He took out a bundle of postcards, selected one, wrote the few words hastily, and handed it to Deck.

"You need write nothing now," he said. "Just post that. That's all! You understand?"

"Yes, I understand," said the boy. "But, as 'tis doing a service to Anstie and Miss Lucas you are, I won't take money for thim!"

He handed back the coin. He knew he had a dreadful idea in his mind; but it should not be polluted by the touch of money.

"Very good!" said Holthsworth. "But I'll make it up for you. You won't forget?"

"Never fear," said the boy. "There are some things that can never be forgotten."

And utterly oblivious or ignorant of the boy's meaning, Holthsworth proceeded gaily to the parsonage.

A few days later the Dispensary Committee met in the little hovel where the poor came for medical help, and drugs were dispensed for their relief. Although the parish priest, who was chairman, demurred a little to the proposal that a Protestant should be elected to a district almost exclusively Catholic, his protest was official, and but half-hearted. Hugh Ireton was unanimously elected, and, as he returned thanks, he begged a few weeks' respite, until he was able to get a house, and other things. The Committee gravely winked at each other, and granted the permission without the

slightest objection. One old fellow demanded in fierce tones of zeal for the public welfare, whether he would get a competent substitute. This Ireton guaranteed for the whole time of his absence; and the Committee winked again.

XXXVIII

IN BLACKWELL

How easy is the descent to Hell, how few pause and linger on the smooth slope that leads thereunto; how strong must be the hands and how commanding the voice that will stay the downward rush to destruction; and how rare the charity that will risk the trouble of doing so, we know well. In the great majority of cases there seems to be no possibility of remedy, until the soul touches the last, dread circle, from which, alone, there seems a possibility of emergence.

Poor little Anstie, the freckled village belle, was no exception. It was easy to foresee where the fickle and frail butterfly would break its wings and flutter and fall. It had no love for base things; but it was flung amongst them almost involuntarily, and was powerless to reassert itself and rise.

The very night that she had helped Miriam to escape from that horrid den, she was smitten with such fearful remorse that her reason was about to give way. The vision of that noble and lovable woman, whom the villagers used to compare to the Mother of God for her beauty and goodness and dignity, in such terrific and perilous surroundings, was such a shock to the feelings of the wretched girl, that she passed from hysteric fit to fit during that long and awful night; and wept, cried, prayed for deliverance from the dread environments. It was the majestic and holy figure of Chastity suddenly appearing amongst loathsome demons, and awakening the slumbering, but not extinguished instincts of the poor girl to a sane and rational estimate of her degraded condition. The very idea, horrible as it was, that Miriam could be

entrapped into such a dreadful life, shocked the soul of the girl into virtue. But could she help herself now? Had she got the fatal impetus that could only cease with her ultimate destruction?

She had been flung out incontinently immediately after Miriam's flight; had struggled sadly against temptation; had fallen, risen; fallen again; and at last found herself, as if in a haven of refuge, in the largest female penitentiary, just across the river, in New York. Hard as was the discipline, and unpleasant the associations, she felt a sense of home comfort and safety there; and then, she made up her mind, that, cost what it might to her pride, she would instantly on her release make for her village home in Ireland, and at least try to die in the friendship of God.

She was soon placed in the infirmary of the prison; and, as she was well-conducted and amenable to discipline, she got special charge of an old, refractory inmate, an *habituée* of the prison, named "Auntie Jenny." Auntie Jenny seemed to have passed her life alternately between the street and the gaol. She was now very aged and infirm, half-palsied from years and drink, generally passive rather than resigned under her misfortunes; but sometimes fiercely aggressive and ill-tempered under provocation. Yet the remains of ancient beauty and gentle breeding were discernible in her pallid face and large grey eyes; and in certain little daintinesses of manner that were quite unknown amongst the other inmates of the gaol. She had fine hands, and her long, tapering fingers, unsoiled by labour, and neither parched nor withered by time, seemed to give her perpetual occupation in keeping them fair and clean and beautiful. She spoke but seldom, and then with deliberation and with a gentle accent that had not been picked up in the American land. But, that gentle accent gave way whenever Auntie Jennie was driven into a passion, which, alas! was often enough.

A certain confidence sprang up between the woman and Anstie under unpropitious circumstances. The girl had

had sleepless nights on the streets of the mighty city, and her first night in the infirmary was broken by the repeated coughs and moans of the old invalid. In the grey dawn of a winter's morn, Anstie woke up from a fitful slumber, her nerves on edge after a sleepless night; and she turned over restlessly muttering a half-suppressed:

"Damn you!"

The woman arose, lifting herself feebly on her elbows, and casting a look of intense disgust and scorn and anger at the girl, she uttered an oath so dreadful that the latter woke up to a perfect consciousness of horror and amazement. And, not yet content, the wretched woman continued to pour out such a torrent of vituperation against Anstie, that the latter at last got up, and proceeded to dress, muttering:—

"Mother of God in Heaven! how did I deserve this?"

"How dare you speak of God's Mother, you! and in such a place?" said Jennie.

But the ejaculation seemed to soften the anger of the wretched woman; and when Anstie was fully dressed she heard the peremptory command:—

"Come here!"

Humbled and broken-hearted, the poor girl obeyed the command, and came over to the bedside.

"Where did ye get that?" said Aunt Jennie, pointing to the scapular around the girl's neck, and then fingering it reverently.

The girl muttered something.

"Did you dare wear that when you sinned against God and His Mother?" the old woman asked.

The girl hung her head.

"Weren't you afraid it would strangle you, and send you soul to Hell?" persisted the old woman.

"I promised the priest never to leave it off till I died," wept the girl.

"It has saved you," said Auntie Jennie, with some tenderness. "Come here, girl, after breakfast. The doctor will allow you. I want to speak to you."

That was a memorable conference, for it seemed to have lightened the horror of their lives. They came to share some great secret which seemed to knit them closely together. From that day, Auntie Jennie became gentle and amenable; Anstie laboured with all earnestness and by uniform good conduct to remit as much of her sentence as she could.

Both were eager to get away from prison, for both had a supreme object now before them, on whose attainment their own happiness and that of others depended. A few times Auntie Jennie, whose eagerness alarmed the prison doctor, lest she should collapse from a diseased heart, made some special entreaty to Anstie; but the girl, looking around the prison ward, the prison clothes, the grated window, shuddered and said:—

“No! No! Have patience. It would never do.”

At last the day of Anstie's release arrived. Auntie Jennie seemed to have grown younger by twenty years. She was more careful than ever about her toilette, especially about her hands. She gave instruction after instruction to the young girl; then bade her good-bye, after placing in her hands a packet, which had been hitherto locked in the Governor's safe.

“Into her own hands, my dear,” she said, in a quavering voice. “Into her own hands, only! Keep it till you see her. Trust it to no one else! And tell her—”

Here she paused, and looked around her in a questioning manner.

“No—my God! it would never do,” she said, lying back on her pillows. “It would kill me and kill her.”

Then, as if animated by some sudden hope, she said:—

“Tell me again what she is like. And tell me as if your soul's salvation depended upon it. What was she like as a child?”

“She was tall for her age,” said Anstie. “She was very white and pale, but she was never sick. She had big eyes like—like yours, Ma'am; and the people used to say that she could look at the sun.”

"Yes, yes, yes," said the old woman, impatiently, "I can see it all. But, when she grew up, what was she like?"

She had asked the question a hundred times for the three or four weeks that had elapsed since she became acquainted with the girl. But she seemed to be never tired of conjuring up the picture.

"She was taller and thinner," replied Anstie, "but so lovely that we used to say, it would be the Blessed Virgin Mary, only that she was a Protestant. Oh, Ma'am, lave me go and find her for you."

"No, no, girl!" said the old woman, fiercely. "She would cast me off. She would despise me."

"Oh, no, Ma'am," wept the girl, "you don't know Miss Miriam. Why, the fool, Coppal, used to follow her like a dog."

"Then she would take me to her, and nurse me in my old age, and, perhaps we could go back to Glendarragh together, and remain together for evermore. Did you say that Mr. Lucas had never been found?"

"Never, Ma'am. He was blown over the cliff, and his body was washed out to say, and he'll never come back — never!"

"And Holthsworth — the evil genius of my life — did you say the devil had him too?"

"So 'twas said, Ma'am, that he was kilt in a row in Dublin."

"Then all's right. Now go, my good girl, and find Miriam out, and let me know. But, on your soul, never hint that you saw me here! Keep our little plan known only to ourselves. Will you swear that you never knew me in gaol?"

"I will, Ma'am!"

"And that I am a lady, by birth and education, and in manner."

"I will, Ma'am!"

"And no matter how eager she may be; and if she is my child she will be eager enough, she's not to see me except as a lady?"

"All right, Ma'am!"

"Then swear all that. Kiss your scapular!"

And Anstie registered her oath on her scapular.

But again the craving in the mother's heart to see her child seemed to supersede every legitimate feeling of pride.

"I must see her! I must see her!" she cried, passionately. "My God, if I were to die without seeing her! And the doctor says my heart is weak and may snap at any moment! Tell me, girl — you know my child — you say you know her! Would she not cast me off, and despise me, and scorn me if she saw me here?"

"Oh, no, Ma'am, she wouldn't," Anstie repeated for the hundredth time. "I know Miss Miriam well; and she would come to you, and take you with her, and nurse you, and close your eyes when you came to die."

"Then, girl, I must see her here! And at once, mind you, at once! I can't run the risk of never seeing my child again. Go and bring Miriam hither, and may — God — bless — you!"

But before the girl could say her last Good-bye! to the wretched woman, the latter again changed; and, dreading the shock which the revelation of her extreme wretchedness would give her child, she finally determined that Anstie should seek out Miriam, deliver the packet, assure Miriam of her mother's well-being and happiness, and promise that she should yet see the mother she had been seeking in vain and for so long a time.

Full of the idea of doing one good act in her life, and bringing happiness to one who had been her beloved mistress, Anstie left the prison gates early one winter's morning, and sped, as rapidly as she could to the quay-stand, where she knew the cabman would be found who had driven Miriam to her lodgings that memorable night of her escape. She had to linger and wait about the quay the whole day, watching the boats coming and going to the slip, chatting with the cabmen, some of whom were rude, some sympathetic with the wretched girl. It was

only when the pale wintry sun was sinking down beneath the horizon, and leaving his last pink reflections on roof and church-spire, that the cabman returned, and not only gave Anstie Miriam's address, but, as it was in a distant part of the city, offered to drive her thither. The girl eagerly accepted.

"Third flat, first door to the right!" said the porter at the door. "But I don't think Miss Lucas is at home."

Nevertheless Anstie bounded up the stairs, and on reaching Miriam's apartments, she found a small boy coiled up at the door just as she had seen Coppal in the old house at Glendarragh.

"Is Miss Lucas in?" cried the girl in her excitement.

"Na," said the boy. "She ain't. What do youse want Miss Lucas fer?"

"That's nothing to you," said Anstie. "I want to see Miss Lucas at once."

"P'raps," said the boy, "ef youse had a forty-foot tellerscope, and ef you could see in the dark like a cat, youse might see Miss Lucas. But, ez it is —"

"Look here, sonny," said Anstie, diplomatically, "do you care for Miss Lucas?"

"Care for Miss Lucas?" echoed the boy. "That's not the word. She hippernotised me with her eyes, and I sees nothin', nothin' but her, night and day."

"Well, shake up, sonny, and shake off the thing; and tell me where she is. I have a most important message for her."

"Then I'm afraid you can't deliver it," said the boy, "except through the sounder."

"What sounder?" said the girl.

"The telleraphone!" said the boy. "Ef I don't mistake Miss Lucas has left this land of freedom for the ould land, as me gran'mudder sez."

"Gone back to Ireland!" said Anstie, in amazement.

"Yaas! Gone back to Hoireland; and left behind her a widder an' a horfan."

At first, paralysed by the idea, and seeing the utter

hopelessness of carrying out her promise to Auntie Jennie, Anstie was in despair. Then, a sudden gleam of hope lit up her face, as she saw the chance offered her of carrying out her commission, and reaching her own home again. She at once determined that this was a chance not to be lost. But alas! how was she, a poor, penniless waif, to find the means of securing a passage homewards? She had a vague notion that her ticket would cost at least five guineas; and how were five guineas to be procured? There was only one way; and she at once determined to adopt it. But she wished to make sure that this was to be no wild goose chase.

"Listen, boy," she said, sitting down on the step with the street-waif. "You and me are about quits, I guess in one way. But we both have a feel for Miss Lucas. Now, look here, Miss Lucas has been seeking her mother ever since she came to New York —"

"I knows dat," said the boy. "Tell me somethink new."

"Well, I have found her mother," continued Anstie, "and I want to bring them together again. Besides, I have an important packet for Miss Lucas, which must be given into no hands but hers. Now, it is clear that if Miss Lucas is gone back to Ireland, I must follow her —"

"Then, why doncher?" said the boy.

"You little blackguard," said Anstie, in a passion, "you know right well what I mean. I don't want to make a fool of myself in following Miss Lucas where she isn't. Once more, where is Miss Lucas? Where has she gone?"

"I tould youse all I knows," said the boy. "Ef youse won't believe me, go and arsk old Hawkeye at the Central."

There were many reasons why Anstie should not approach Hawkeye. So she contented herself with asking once more: —

"I don't want any Hawkeye. Do you say that Miss Lucas is gone to Ireland?"

"I does," said the boy, "an' what's more —"

"Do you swear it?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh, yaas, ef coorse, youse a Commissioner fer taking Affy Davys. Where is the book?" sneered the boy.

"Say 'pon my sowl!" said Anstie.

"Na!" said the boy. "I have no sowl!"

"Then say, 'pon my mother's sowl," said Anstie.

"Na!" said the boy.

"Why won't you say 'pon my mother's sowl?" said Anstie. "You're lying to me about Miss Lucas."

"I ain't, dang you, I ain't!" said the boy.

"Then, why don't you swear?" said Anstie.

"Because," whimpered the boy, "I has no mudder."

"Poor little beggar!" she said, putting a coin into his dirty hand. "We're pretty like each other there!"

But she believed him.

XXXIX

ABSOLVED

THERE remained, therefore, only one thing to be done, namely, to get back to Ireland as speedily as possible, to see Miss Miriam, deliver her packet, and do everything in her power to bring together those who had been yearning for each other for so many years. But five pounds! Where was she to get five pounds? She pondered over many a plan, which she no sooner formed, than she dismissed as foolish and impracticable. At last, pressed onward by her anxiety to meet her young mistress, she decided on what she regarded as a desperate thing.

Trembling all over with anxiety and apprehension, she pulled the day-bell at a certain presbytery not far from Fifth Avenue, and asked to see one of the priests. She was ushered into a room by a trim servant, whose bright, cheery face she envied, thinking, thinking, with the swift-ness of shame, that she, too, might have been thus. The girl was Irish, fresh from the old land, with the roses of Ireland still on her cheeks. She was about the same age with Anstie; but oh! the girl thought, what a gulf, what a chaos between them! That girl in all the sweetness and freshness of her innocence, ignorant of vice, knowing only the simple and holy things of far off mountain-homes or sea-cabins, like her own, over which seagulls screamed, and in whose thatch sea-swallows built; and she, with all the terrible and loathsome knowledge that comes from the experience of sin. She lowered her eyes before those of the little servant, and crept as on a broken wing, into the parlour of the presbytery.

It was a bad preparation for the still more serious ordeal of meeting a priest. She had not spoken to one since

she had left Ireland. She had even been estranged from them for some time previous, because that tender and filial confidence that subsists between the priest and the innocent members of his flock vanishes the moment the sheep strays from the paths of virtue, and hate and fear very often come to take its place. Anstie had not reached that awful depth when a Catholic begins to hate and loathe the very name of priest, because symbolical of the virtue it has abandoned for ever. But a great dread of everything supernatural possessed her soul; and here was the embodiment of the supernatural standing now before her. He was a man grown grey in the service of the Church, and he had long ago lost that comprehensive charity that looks without suspicion on the mendicant. He had learned this cold prudence by experience, whilst the flame of practical benevolence was not extinguished. He looked the girl all over, muttered a slight *H'm*, and said:—

“Well?”

It was not spoken harshly, but in a business-like manner; yet it blanched the cheek of the girl, and she held her hands locked piteously and tremblingly before him. She knew that he had read the book of her life. She could not open her lips; but continued staring wildly at the priest. Then he guessed at once that there was no deception there; and his voice took a milder tone.

“Sit down,” he said, taking a seat also, but averting his face, “and let me know what you want. You are not a member of our congregation?”

“N-no!” said the girl, hesitatingly.

Could this man ever believe her story, she thought? She decided that it was impossible.

“Father,” she said, faintly, “I shouldn’t have come. Let me go away!”

If she had pleaded in the most eloquent tones for pity, she could not have succeeded better.

“No, no, my child,” he cried at once, and looking straight at her, “that won’t do. You came here for a purpose. Let me know it!”

"You won't believe me story when I tell you," said Anstie. "And you can't help me. Let me go!"

"Oh, just as you please," he said rising. "But, at any rate, as you have come hither, let me know who you are; and what you intend doing!"

She stopped for a moment, moistened her dry lips, and stammered: —

"I am a fallen girl. I want to go back to Ireland — to save my soul."

"And you came here for money?" he said, sternly. "My good girl, don't you know that hundreds, like you, come here for their passages home. The Bank of New York wouldn't stand all these applications. I can do nothing for you."

He turned to open the door for the girl; but something in her wistful looks stayed his hand.

"You have given up your wicked life? What has changed you, because your class" — how the dreadful words cut Anstie like a knife — "seldom repent but on their deathbeds."

She took some time to gather her words together. Then she said: —

"'Twas the Mother of God, and Miss Miriam!"

"And who may Miss Miriam be?" he said, yielding to some curiosity, and letting go the door-handle.

"She was my mistress in Ireland," said Anstie, "she come over here to see if she could find her mother."

"Well?" said the priest, somewhat interested now.

"She advertised in the papers," continued the girl, "and was trapped into a — a den. I was sent to see her and drag her into sin. But it saved my sowl. I rescued Miss Miriam, and was flung out on the streets myself."

"And what became of her?" said the priest.

"She wint back to Ireland," said Anstie, "just whin I had found her mother in gaol."

"Then you were in gaol?" queried the priest.

"I was," she said. "And there I found Miss Miriam's mother."

"And it was just too late?" said the priest.

"It was," replied Anstie. "When I was let out, I made my way to Miss Miriam's lodgings and found she had just left, and gone back to Ireland."

"And you wish to follow her?" said the priest.

"Yes," said Anstie, but before the stern face that looked at hers, her heart fell again.

"You are not a good hand at deception," said the priest. "I have heard better made-up stories than that!"

"Then you don't believe me, Fa—Father?" she stammered. The old familiar appellation seemed to choke her.

"Certainly not," he replied. "Who could believe such a story as that? I meet impostors, like you, every day!"

At another time, Anstie's furious temper would have blazed up in defiance at the imputation. But she had been terribly humbled; and, besides, she felt she had a mission before her now.

"You should have left me go, when I asked you," she said. "As you don't believe me word, lave me go now."

"Certainly," he said, opening the door for her.

She had gone out on the steps, when a sudden thought seemed to strike her. She came back, and again confronted the priest who had not left the hall.

"You're a hard man," she said, "an' if you wor to offer me now all the money you have, I wouldn't tetch a cent of it. But to show you I'm not a liard nor an impostor, look at that!"

She had fumbled in her breast, and drawn out a parchment, neatly tied and sewn together. It was marked on the back: *Deed of Assignment from Jane Lucas, née Holthsworth, to her daughter, Miriam Lucas.* Date and solicitor's name followed.

The priest took it carelessly, glanced his eye over it and waited.

"I have sworn on my scaffler," said Anstie, "to deliver that to Miss Miriam."

"It looks genuine," said the priest. "Wait!"

He went upstairs, and presently returned, with a roll of greenbacks.

"I have been taken in so often," he said sternly, "by your class, Irish girls coming over here to find their Hell — why, in God's name, don't your Bishops and Priests block that fatal river-mouth at Queenstown? — that I am disposed to be always suspicious. Here, however —"

"I said I wouldn't tetch a cent of your money," said Anstie, interrupting, "an' I'll keep my word."

The girl's attitude seemed to create a sentiment of respect for her in the priest's mind.

"Very good!" he said, rolling up the notes. "But, if you want to go to Ireland, I'll send you."

"I'll take no money from you," she said.

"If I get your passage ticket for you, will you go?" he asked.

She hesitated, looking down at the floor, and with a blush of shame and pride on her face.

"I don't want to be beholden to you," she said, "but I must see Miss Miriam, and —"

"Yes! there is no other way," he cried. "I'll purchase your ticket. Be at the landing-stage on next Friday morning; and I shall have all arranged with the agents."

She was turning away without even thanking him, when he said: —

"You are not going to venture on the high seas without making your peace with God, I suppose?"

She seemed to hesitate; but he said peremptorily: —

"Go straight to confession, girl, this very day, this hour."

"Where can I go?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Straight into the church," he said. "I shall send one of the priests to you in half an hour."

"I can't," she said, pleadingly, the tears standing in her eyes. "'Tis years since I bent a knee to a priest."

"So much the more reason for going now," he said. "You dare not go out to sea, and run the risk of being lost in your present state."

"God help me, I can't," she stammered. "'Tis aisier to be drowned than to tell any wan what I am, and have been!"

"Nonsense, child," he said, gently taking her by the hand. "Come now, I know all. You shall have no trouble with me."

Two minutes ago, she almost hated and feared him. Now, she followed him like a child.

Half an hour after, a young girl trod the pavements of the great city with a step as light as a fawn's; for had she not made her peace with God, and recovered her lost innocence; and was she not about to say good-bye! and for ever to the gas-lit, wicked, turbulent city, and to see once more the green fields and the glorious seas, and the ever changing, cloud-canopied, benignant skies of her native land?

XL

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

WHEN Miriam returned from Chicago, bringing with her a portfolio of sketches taken from life, and written not only for a literary, but a humanitarian purpose, she had already convinced herself that for this hopelessly diseased world there was no remedy within the range of her knowledge, no specific for an incurable and ineradicable malady. She felt that hitherto she had been a pathologist, not a physician; and she knew how easy it is to discern and point out the woes of humanity, whilst powerless to relieve or remove them. It was rather a cheap thing, she thought — this business of for ever probing and searching into hidden and hideous things. It was no great achievement to be able from personal observation to repeat the woes of Ecclesiastes. As to the other question — how far a woman, a girl, could carry the Atlantean load of human sorrow on her shoulders — she had now definitely made up her mind. It was no work for a frail woman. It needed a Reformer, a Revolutionist, a Redeemer; and where was he to be found?

She went straight to the office of her paper, proffered her sketches to the editor, watched him casting his hasty, professional glance over them, nod approvingly. Then she said: —

“This is the last of my work, at least of such work, Mr. Calloway. To be candid, I am thoroughly sick of it, and must seek to do something else.”

“I am very sorry, Miss Lucas,” he said, urbanely, “and would ask you to reconsider that decision. These sketches have already caught on; and more are looked for. You are not pleased with the remuneration we have offered you?”

"'Tis not that," said Miriam, at once. "I am ashamed to have to write such things at all for money. And I cannot see what the public admire in them. Are they not painful and harrowing subjects?"

"Precisely. It is because they are painful and harrowing the public appreciate them. When you paint vice in all its sombre colours, the Pharisee thinks and feels he has a most admirable reason for his beautiful prayer: 'I thank God I am not like the rest of men'; and when you paint misery and destitution, the man who picks his teeth after dinner, is very happy for his own immunity. When you draw with your graphic pen, a cancer case in a public hospital, the healthy woman shrugs her shoulders, and wonders why women should have cancers; and when you paint rags, my lady hugs her furs and silks, that is, if she can do so without crumpling them. You see then, of what an amount of pleasure your rash resolution is depriving the world. But, *que voulez-vous*?" he cried, swinging around on his office stool, and writing rapidly. "This is your cheque, Miss Lucas! Should you reconsider your determination, you know where to find me!"

"Thanks very much for all your kindness," said Miriam. "But I suppose this would be of no use to you?"

She handed him a carefully written manuscript of about five thousand words.

He took it leisurely, smiled at the title, ran his eyes over the contents, and shook his head.

"I fear not," he said musingly. "*A New Heaven and a New Earth*," he continued, reading aloud the title. "'Twould never do for my readers, Miss Lucas. They don't want any such thing. They are mostly of the class whose lines in life are cast in pleasant places. They don't want anything, but to be let alone, and to enjoy their own prosperity and — the misery of the multitudes. This earth is enough for them. And as for Heaven —"

The good man shrugged his shoulders.

"But I'll tell you what I shall do. I have a friend, a

dreamer of dreams, who sees sunsets, and 'the light that never was,' etc., etc., and with your permission I'll send the paper to him. He has a magazine of his own, full of all kinds of precocities, and mayhap, he'll accept it. Does it please you?"

"Yes!" said Miriam, rising up. "I want to see it in print, even if no eye but my own should read it."

"And you will remember that you are to come back to us, when you repent," said the editor.

"You are very kind," said Miriam.

She went at once to her rooms. Coyote was on the step that led to the landing, asleep. She gently stirred him. He rubbed his eyes, and woke up.

"Oh, youse come back, are youse?" he said, sleepily.

"I am," said Miriam. "I hope you have been a good lad in my absence?"

"I has," said the boy. "I thot youse had gone away for good; and would never come back."

"Oh! You did. And, of course, you were pleased to think I should never return?"

But the boy began to howl piteously.

"There, there," said Miriam, soothingly. "I suppose no one called in my absence?"

But the boy howled more piteously than ever.

"What's the matter?" she said. "You've been getting into trouble again, I suppose?"

"I hasn't," he said, and then began to weep and mumble again.

"There was wan of thim Maryannes wanted you," he said, at length.

"And what did she want? and what are Maryannes?" asked Miriam.

"She wanted nothin'," said the boy. "She said she wanted to see you, and thin she wint away."

And Miriam, unconscious of the grave facts underlying the boy's untruthfulness, dismissed the matter from her mind.

Next morning, she set out to interview the editor of the magazine, in which she hoped to see her Gospel to the Gentiles, her proclamation of a "New Heaven and a New Earth."

She found him in his private residence not far from a Carmelite Church, and down near the quays. Unlike most business men, whom Miriam had hitherto met, he was of advanced age, and very much more of the type of professional men in England and Ireland, than those of the same grade and standing in America. He had very gentle manners; and as he motioned Miriam to a seat, she felt that this might be the spirit that understood hers.

He continued gazing at her for a few seconds, not in any rude manner, but in a kind, sympathetic way, as if he wished to know whether her workmanship, which lay before him, was the output of a literary drudge, or the inspiration of a fresh and superior mind. At last, taking up the manuscript, he said:—

"This paper, my dear Miss Lucas, from a business standpoint is worth absolutely nothing."

Miriam's face fell. She had not expected this.

He waited a little.

"I mean," he said, "that it is not the kind of paper that would run the next edition of our magazine into the hundred thousand."

"I expected to hear something like this," said Miriam. True! But her hopes overruled her judgment.

"The public, that is the reading public," the editor went on, "does not want a new heaven or a new earth. The public is quite content with things as they are. The world is a vale of tears; but people don't want to leave the vale, so far as I can see. And Heaven is a beautiful place. But people don't want to go to Heaven."

"I understand — the fear of death," said Miriam.

"No! Not even that," he replied. "But if you could bring Heaven down on earth, you would hardly be thanked by the multitude. The world is more satisfied with itself than you think."

"Satisfied!" said Miriam, in a tone of surprise and horror. "How can men be satisfied with the existing condition of things? Why it seems to me that every day, every hour, reveals horror after horror in this *Inferno*!"

"Ah me!" said the editor, turning aside. In a few moments, after a glance at the manuscript, he said gently: —

"I have hurt you by saying that from a business standpoint this paper is valueless. Allow me to make reparation by saying, that from a literary standpoint it is of superlative excellence?"

Miriam bowed her head gently.

"But," said the editor, placing his hand on the broad sheets before him, "do you believe it all?"

It was now Miriam's turn; and she said, with all the emphasis of a great faith: —

"Most certainly!"

Then she added, as the good man was looking inquiringly at her: —

"It is so much a matter of faith and principle with me, that should you be pleased to print it, I shall ask for no remuneration!"

"You must allow me to have something to say in that matter," said the editor. "But you have brought back my youth again. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed!'"

He seemed sunk in thought for a long time, his face buried in his hands. Then, as if speaking to himself, and not regarding Miriam's presence, he said: —

"How long have I been an infidel? Let me see — ten — fifteen — twenty years! And now, this girl has converted me again; has brought back my old faith in a new humanity. Dear God, how I cherished the idea! How I rejoiced over it! How I dreamed of it! How often poor George and I debated it and built up our cloud-towers, wrought by the ghostly hands of faith and enthusiasm! And I abandoned it: I became traitor! And now out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord rebukes

me! Is it too late? Can I roll back from the book of eternity these twenty years; and begin once more?"

He bowed his head more deeply on his hands, and remained thus a long time.

Then, as if becoming suddenly conscious of Miriam's presence, he said meekly: —

"You will leave me this paper, Miss Lucas; and you shall see it in print. The other matters we shall decide again!"

He rose abruptly from his chair, and walked towards the door. Miriam rose also and accompanied him. He paused a moment, and running his eyes over Miriam's face and figure he said tenderly: —

"God has made you very beautiful, child, in soul and body. You make men mindful of the Eternal Beauty. Yes! Yes! you are quite right. There is some great principle of goodness and loveliness hiding somewhere from us. It is souls, like yours, that prove it and reveal it. We can only seek it blindly."

Softened by the good man's words, and conscious of a fresh glow of enthusiasm, Miriam left the house, and found herself immediately in front of a large Church, to which an eager congregation was streaming. So far as she could judge, the crowd consisted of very poor working people, mostly foreigners, as she judged by their dress and eagerness, and by the soft liquid salutations in Italian which they addressed to each other. The greater part of them were not prepossessing. They were old men and women, clad picturesquely enough, but not in the smooth and perfect habiliments that belong to the educated classes. Nevertheless, as Miriam had thrown in her lot with the masses, she never shrank from contact with them; and their little ways, from which the more fastidious would naturally shrink, seemed to have nothing revolting to her taste or imagination.

She entered the Church with them. It was a morning service held during an eight days' Retreat; and it was, therefore, designedly short and simple. Miriam took

a seat vacated for her by some young girl, who saw at once that she was a stranger in the Father's House; and during the Mass that was being celebrated at the High Altar when she entered, she was engaged partly in trying to save her dress from the contamination of the floor, which, alas! was not scrupulously clean, and partly in watching the eager and passionate gestures of the people, especially at the Elevation and the subsequent prayers.

Just before Mass concluded, a young priest, dressed in a brown habit, clasped by a white rope, from which a brown Rosary hung, entered the pulpit; and when the celebrant left the Altar, he held his hand aloft, and said in a solemn tone: —

“Listen!”

Instantly, there was a deep hush on the vast multitude, and after a pause that seemed to intensify the silence, he went on: —

“I am not going to preach to you a sermon. I am going to read for you the words of the Prince of Preachers. Listen! Mark them well! Let each word sink into your hearts, and inflame them with the fire which He came on earth to enkindle!

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know you are my disciples if you have love one for another.”

“If you love me, keep my commandments.”

“I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.”

“If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.”

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.”

“Abide in me; and I in you!”

“As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love.”

"This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you."

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

"This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

"I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them thou hast given me, because they are thine."

"They are not of the world; and I also am not of the world."

"Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth."

"And not for them only do I pray; but for them also, who through their word shall believe in me. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, and that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

"And the glory which thou hast given to me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one."

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou also hast loved me."

"I shall add nothing to this," continued the preacher, "but to say, that herein is contained not only the secret of eternal life, but the secret of human happiness, the welfare of the race. Certain would-be reformers and philanthropists have from the first days of Christianity sought to improve on these words of Eternal Wisdom, and have failed. Today, too, certain doctrinaires, well-meaning, perhaps, dream of a new world, built on cloud-castles of benevolence and well-doing. In vain! Eternal Wisdom hath spoken, and men cannot improve on its teaching. Love one another! Shrink not from vice, or poverty or shame! Love one another. If you are weary, seek some one more weary, and pillow that head on your bosom! If you are poor, seek some one poorer, and share with him your crust! If you are sick, seek out some one more afflicted; and, in consoling him, strengthen yourself!

If you are in sin, rescue the sinner, and you make your peace with God! Despise no one! Remember the legend of Christ and his tender reverence for even the dead dog, whom his disciples loathed. 'Yea! what beautiful teeth he hath!' Love one another; hence alone cometh the Vision of the Seer — 'There shall be a new heaven and a new earth!'"

Miriam almost leaped from her seat at the words; and with a heart bursting from emotion, she followed the crowd into the street.

XLI

FOUND

WHEN Miriam left the Carmelite Church, she did not follow the crowd back through the thoroughfares of the city; but to hide her emotion, and to get a little leisure for thinking, she turned aside into a quiet street that seemed to lead down to the river. It was deserted, and its deep silence led her further and further down, until she inhaled the odours of the sea, and stood watching the waters which lapped against the quays at her feet. There was a ferry-slip here; but just now, no boat swung with the tide; and Miriam, engrossed with her reflections, stood gazing down at the deep, black waters, whilst the eyes of her soul were turned inward over surging ideas and emotions that had been raised, as a mountain tarn is raised, by a feeble breath. Every word of the preacher came back, with all their sweet, sad significance. She knew they were the farewell words of Christ to his disciples, on that memorable evening, when he was about to go forth to his agony. She saw the equinoctial sun setting in the west behind the hills of Moab; and the sudden darkness coming down over the city, and entering the supper-chamber, and flooding it as if to shroud the Divine Figure and to veil the tender Face, so that only the sweet accents of Love and Sorrow could be heard. She placed herself in imagination in that dim sanctuary of sorrow; and allowed each word, repeated by a faithful memory, to smite and sink into her soul and be absorbed there. For "it was night." Far away the palace of Herod was shown by the lights that twinkled here and there in its walls; the temple fires across the valley were burning faint and red against the night; the sounds of the city were dropping

off, one by one, swallowed up in the great silence; and, only the voice of Kedron, musical in the dusk and drapery of the night-folds, came up — a voice of Nature, beating time, as from the beginning, with the voice of God. And out of the darkness, and across the noisy centuries, Miriam heard the mysterious accents that spoke not to a few illiterate fishermen only, and a taxgatherer up from the city-marts; but to that vast aggregate of beings, passion-rent, turbulent, and troubled, that are gathered together on the surface of the earth, under the generic title of humanity. It was to these that Jesus spoke from the supper-chamber. This was his last legacy to his race — the final word, that was to solve all human riddles, reconcile all spiritual antagonisms, supply the defects in human economics — the gospel of the learned, the philosophy of the poor, the religion of all if “they wish to be His disciples.”

How simple and how sublime it all appeared to the mind of this girl, which had been agitated for so many years in trying to sound the depths of human woes, and to devise a final remedy. How empty now sounded the old familiar scientific phrases — labour, capital, industry, unearned increments, grafts, monopolies, trusts, wages, dividends, investments, economics, pluralities, and all the vast verbiage of mart and factory, of stock-exchange and cattle-yard, of railways and steamboats, with which men, cozening their reason, and cheating themselves, seek to hide the mighty issues that will come surging up, clamorous for settlement, which no human legislation can effect! She saw suffering and revolt, government and cruelty, avarice with its illicit gains protected by law, robbery and violence and disaffection stamped out by law; and she saw that the terrible internecine struggle has no end, can have no end, because if it break into the orgies of revolution, it only leaves the struggling masses spent and sickened for a generation; and the successful classes paralysed with terror, or frantic in the hysterics of revenge. And she saw generation rise up after generation, fighting,

dying, and forgotten, leaving behind them their watch-words and handing down their standards to reel through the smoke and flame of another battle; and all the time here is the Truce of God, the Charter of Everlasting Peace:—

“A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

And then came back the preacher's comment:—

“Look not upwards but with reverence; look not before you but with esteem; but look beneath you to rescue and to love!”

She woke up from her reverie to hear the splash of oars in the distance, and looking across the dark waters, she saw a large ferry-boat leaving the precincts of Blackwell Island and coming towards her. It was apparently crowded, for she saw the two oarsmen straining violently, and the gunwale of the boat seemed to rise but a few inches from the water. And, presently, she heard hoarse voices of women raising snatches of some street-song, or shouting at each other, whilst peals of laughter seemed to rise in applause of some jest more vile than another. Miriam was about to leave the pier, when the curious passion for studying the lower elements of society that had made her so successful a journalist, restrained her; and she leaned against the strong iron pillar around which in rough weather the ropes of the ferry-boat were fastened. She was speedily seen by the occupants of the boat, and rude, obscene jests were flung at her—at her beauty, at her dress, at her aristocratic bearing, until the prow of the boat struck the ferry-steps, and one specimen after another of degraded womanhood, in youth and age, struggled to get on shore, and swore and cursed and struck, as if the boat were about to capsize. There was hardly a face whereon vice had not left its hideous scar—bold, fearless, defiant faces, seamed by passion, or discoloured by animal vices. One was beautiful, as of a fallen archangel, with great large, lustrous eyes, through which there shot a baleful fire, and a pallid complexion, through which,

when she came near, were seen the little red threads of veins that denoted early dissipation. She came over leisurely to where Miriam was standing, as if to insult her; but something in the attitude of Miriam seemed to touch her; and she went back to the boat to help out the last of the discharged prisoners, an old woman, haggard and pale, her grey locks hanging down in elfin disorder on her face and neck. She was cursing with marvellous volubility her younger companions, who had so lightly left her, and was being helped feebly over the thwarts of the boat by the ferry-men — a lump of rags, of shrivelled humanity, of degraded and dishonoured old age.

When she had been helped on to the lower step of the slip, she turned around, and stooping down, she dipped her soiled hands in the tide, and washed and wiped them carefully; and Miriam saw, with some amazement, that they were singularly white hands and small and carefully kept from wrinkles or soilure. Impatient at the delay, the young girl who had proffered her assistance went away, and one of the ferry-men playfully shouted: —

“Now, Auntie Jenny, old girl, you must be quick. Passengers will be coming on, I guess, and we must keep the slip free!”

She answered him with an oath; but he helped her up the steps and on to the pavement.

“I guess she’ll be here again soon,” he said to his mate. “I suppose she’ll die in the jug.”

And she seemed like it. She tottered along, dragging her old, tattered shawl and trailing it after her in the mire, until exhausted she sat down on the kerbstone, and began to arrange her wisps of grey hair.

Miriam had been watching the whole proceedings intently, but with a sad and sorrowful heart. She thought she had never seen anything so repulsive before in all her experience; and the words almost broke from her lips: —

“Can it be that Christ died for such as these?” But immediately she dismissed the question as almost blasphemous, for the words came back: —

"Yea, what beautiful teeth!"

She choked down her repugnance, and went over to where the old woman was sitting. They were alone in the deserted street. The ferrymen were in their boat, and invisible. There was no eye but the eye of the "High and Holy One, who inhabiteth Eternity" to witness the meeting of daughter and mother.

She stood over the wretched figure for a moment, hesitating, doubting, wondering what she should do. The old woman had not heard the light footfall behind her, and was watching her hands, and muttering:—

"I guess I must have a half of malt first somewhere."

She was fumbling in the pocket of her dress for a coin, when Miriam's hand rested on her shoulder, and the woman looked up in surprise.

"Oh!" she cried, glancing furiously at Miriam. "You want to nag me again, do you?"

"Come with me!" said Miriam, very kindly, with a slight tone of peremptoriness in her voice.

"Come with you?" repeated Auntie Jennie. "I guess not, my bird of Paradise. I'm on the right side of the law, I guess, as yet."

"I am not arresting you," said Miriam. "I see you are old and feeble. I have a home. I want you to come with me."

"Eh? Oh, you are one of these Salvation Army lasses, that sings and prays. No! I've had enough of praying over there in the jug."

"You won't come?" pleaded Miriam. "I am alone. I have a fairly comfortable home to offer you. You are old and feeble. I will see after your wants and nurse you back to health."

"I guess you're after something else, my lass," said the old woman. "You may be one of Pinkerton's women now. But, what do you want with a poor, feeble, old drunkard? I've done no other crime?"

"You quite mistake," said Miriam, feeling herself by some invisible but irresistible power drawn close to this

sad creature. "I simply want to help. Do come with me!"

"Well, then, if you want to help, just give me half a dollar to buy a pint of malt. There's nothing else I need so much. You see, my lass, prayer isn't in it with the hard stuff."

And she turned away, coiling her grey old locks around her white fingers.

Miriam, pained, disappointed, and disgusted, was about to relinquish her purpose when the old woman seemed to relent.

"Here, my lass," she said, "give us a hand. Who knows, my bonnie lass, but I've found a good thing at last?"

"Then you'll come with me?" said Miriam.

"Yaas. I guess I will. Just to see your diggings, you know. After that, I can decide. Are you willing?"

"Yes!" said Miriam, beginning to feel that the first steps in the redemption of a soul were not so easy as she had supposed. She drew the old woman's arms in hers, and walked slowly along, helping the tottering steps, the old woman hobbling by her side, and muttering:—

"Well! here's a guy!"

When, however, they reached the open thoroughfare, their progress became more difficult. For Auntie Jennie was a well-known character in the city; and, as one after another of the city gamins came by, he stopped to express his opinions about the old street-drunkard and her novel companion. It became so remarkable and so humiliating in the end, that Miriam hailed a cab, and drove rapidly with her burden to her residence.

The old woman, worn by prison life and discipline, and the sad experiences she had passed through, had to be helped upstairs by the strong arms of Miriam; she had hardly reached the rooms in the flat, when she utterly collapsed. In the hour of utmost depression and misery a sudden change took place. Her manner became mild; for her mind began to wander afar.

Lying on the bed in the room next to Miriam's, she commenced to babble of old times and places; and strange expressions came to her lips which seemed to show that in some remote, far-off time she had moved in very high circles. And always in the intervals of delirium, she would watch her hands, and fold them together, and then again call up reminiscences that seemed to have grown pale and faded long ago; but now came back under some strange action of the brain, vivid and clear as when the events themselves had occurred. And, once or twice, she uttered a name and an expression that made Miriam turn pale, and clasp her hand beneath her heart to still its beatings.

As the day advanced, Miriam summoned a physician. He promptly declared that the life of Auntie Jennie hung by a thread.

"Her heart is hopelessly diseased," he said, "and might snap at any moment." He recommended Miriam to send for a clergyman, who promptly came.

His services were brief; and, as he folded his stole and ritual together, he came into Miriam's room and said:

"You are a relative, I presume, of Auntie Jennie's?"

He knew the old woman well.

"No!" said Miriam. "I simply picked her up from the streets this morning. She had just been dismissed from Blackwell Penitentiary."

"Her career of sin and sorrow is about to end," he said. "But she has some things troubling her mind, especially a paper, which she gave a young girl in the penitentiary to be handed to her daughter. She hasn't spoken of it to you?"

"No!" said Miriam. "She has been quite incoherent in her language since she came hither; and I didn't care to interrogate her!"

"There appears to be no remedy, then, for the matter," said the priest. "But God will bless you for your extraordinary kindness to the wretched woman. When the end comes, can you send me a messenger? I shall relieve

you, through one of our charitable societies, from any further burden in relation to her."

Miriam promised to send Coyote.

"Oh, and you have made the acquaintance of that street-waif too," he said. "Very good! I shall make everything easy for you."

He was turning away when he suddenly remembered that he did not know her name.

"Pardon me," he said, "may I ask your name and address?"

"Miriam Lucas," she said, adding the number of her rooms.

"Strange!" he cried, taking out his notebook and writing. "You said — I mean — it is a coincidence that Auntie Jennie, as we know her, is also Lucas! Her name is Jane Holthsworth Lucas, and I think she must have been an Irish lady of some position."

His head was bent low over his notebook, else he would have seen the girl trembling from head to foot. She was summoning up every energy of soul and body to meet her greatest trial. Yet, with tremendous self-possession, she bowed the priest from the room, and then flung herself into a chair, to catch at the silence in which alone she felt she could have strength to face the problem. The woman was moaning in the next room; the cars were rumbling in the street. But Miriam heard nothing, only the heavy beating of her own heart, and the throbbing of the veins in her temples.

After a long time, and a good deal of deliberation, the final issue of which was, that she was nursing an illusion — a weak fear caused by the very dread and horror of the possibility of such a revelation, and that she should promptly dismiss the horrible thought, she rose up, and entered Auntie Jennie's room. The old woman was propped up by pillows, and looked as if she were free from pain; but, in the waning light, Miriam saw the dark purple of congestion gathered upon lips and cheeks, and the changed colour in her eyes. She was pulling at the

counterpane, picking up strands and threads of cotton and dropping them to contemplate her hands. She coughed a little, and, when Miriam woke up her slumbering attention, it was evident, as is so often the case of the dying, that the whole of her recent life with all its accessories and circumstances, had been blotted out, and that in memory she was again the young girl, the happy wife, the exultant mother; and then the tried and persecuted, and at length, the fallen woman.

"Let me help you now to take a drink, a mere sip of milk," said Miriam, lifting up the pillows, so that the invalid might drink.

"Ah! thanks," she cried, leaning back on the pillows refreshed, yet weakened by the exertion. "You are kind. But my heart is weak now. Edwin — you knew Edwin Lucas — he was my husband — used to say: 'Jennie, Jennie, you are too excitable. Some day you'll bring on heart-trouble.' And then, when Myrrha, Miriam, my darling babe was born — it was worse. Because how could I rest, rest, with such a child? Ah, Myrrha, little Myrrha, what you cost me, with your wild, impetuous ways! And that little stammer — I thought I could have it cured! But no! You are crying, Madam, why are you crying? Is it the dawn, or the night?"

For Miriam was now sobbing as if her heart would break, as the dread revelation slowly unveiled itself before her; and every allusion riveted the conviction that in this abandoned and wicked woman, the street-drunkard, the gaol-bird, she had found her long-sought mother. And yet, even here was compensation. Death, the Merciful, had rolled up the panorama of her degraded life, and hidden it away from memory; and lo! the latter drew up in vivid and beautiful colours the fresh and beautiful dream of the morning of her life.

Miriam lit her candles; and turned up partly the gas-jet near the bed. Then she went back to her own room, and brought in her wraps. The night of a sleepless vigil was before her.

Presently, however, Auntie Jennie fell into a troubled sleep, during which the deep, stertorous breathing was broken by snatches of words, as if they welled up from some deep recesses of the past, athwart which had long been rolled the tombstone of forgetfulness. Each word was, to the vigilant sense of Miriam, a fresh revelation; and unconsciously, but yet unerringly, she began to piece together the broken fragments, as one would piece together shreds of a letter hastily torn, but yet decipherable. And when, in the deep hush of midnight, Auntie Jennie awoke, looked around, asked for a drink, seemed conscious for a moment, and then slid into a delirium again, Miriam was able to gather so much from her ravings that the whole story of her life grew up before her, and became rounded into a hideous drama of persecution, suffering, sin and sorrow. And then and there, too, Miriam, having seen the whole, and examined it with a judicial mind, absolved that poor, sinful mother now moving on to Eternity; and even thanked Providence that she was made instrumental in soothing and succouring her in her last moments.

For now it was made clear to Miriam Lucas that that mother was one of the large and unhappy class who have been more sinned against than sinning; who have been tried by injustice, and have sunk sadly beneath the trial. The night wore on to the dawn; and, absorbed in the evolution of the drama of her mother's life, Miriam Lucas was unconscious of her own helplessness and loneliness.

XLII

ON THE WINGS OF THE STORM

IT was only when the grey dawn stole in through the one window of the apartment, and the gas-jet was extinguished, and the face of the dying woman was yellow and purple under the cold day-light, that Miriam began to feel her own terrible loneliness, here in the great city. And, almost for the first time, her stern sense of self-reliance began to give way; and she yearned for some strong hand to hold her up, some friendly soul on whom her woman's heart might lean. And she thought with a pang of regret of Glendarragh and her loving, simple friends, and then, the memory of Hugh Ireton came back, and his tender solicitude, and his reverent care, and his manly offer to help her whenever she needed it, and would call upon him, without a hint or suggestion that he would ask aught in return. But, these things were now afar off across the immeasurable ocean; and here she was in the great, bustling, rumbling city — alone with a criminal and an invalid; alone, with the terrible revelation that this criminal and invalid was her mother. Can there be a deeper depth of sorrow or trial, she thought, than that wherein she, who had so loved the stricken and sorrowful of her race, was now plunged? Or, is there some awful mystery behind it all, which she was slowly unfolding and unravelling? In her distress, she yearned for the companionship of Coyote, the street-waif; but she had not seen him since yesterday, when he appeared so frightened, and howled so piteously. And then another phase of the mystery presented itself — the visit of this girl, of whom Coyote spoke, and the allusion to the message or packet which her mother must have given her. Yes, it was all weird, and strange, and wonderful.

During the day Miriam watched, waited, and listened for further revelations; but the ravings of the dying woman were so incoherent, that she could gather little from them, except that in some way she was related to Holthsworth; that the first trouble in her married life arose from the fact that she had changed her religion; that Miriam, in her earliest infancy, had been baptised in her mother's faith; and that this led to a final breach that had never been healed, but had issued in a separation with disastrous results to both husband and wife. All the petty details of the persecution to which she had been subjected, both by her husband and Holthsworth, who had him under complete control, seemed to come back to the memory of the dying woman, who raved and rambled and ever stopped her raving to ask a hundred times: "*Who are you?*" Was it delirium, or the instinct of the maternal heart, that prompted the question, which Miriam, however, refused to answer, until far out in the day?

In the afternoon, the physician called again. He barely expected to see his patient alive.

"She has had marvellous vitality," he said. "It is strange how these poor criminals, who seem to despise all health regulations, are able to defy disease and death so long. According to all law, Auntie Jennie should have died twenty years ago."

He examined her heart again, whilst the old woman protested vigorously.

"I will not suggest the hospital again, Miss Lucas," he said. "It is too late. She cannot possibly survive this night. And the heavy, sultry atmosphere is oppressing her, like the rest of us. We shall have a thunder-storm in an hour!"

He injected strychnine in the arm; and it was pitiful to see the smile of vanity that lit up the dying woman's face, when he said:—

"She has beautiful hands, has she not?"

"Yes!" said Miriam simply. "She was evidently a gentlewoman!"

Auntie Jennie caught at the words; and her heart was beating steadily, and her brain was clearing under the influence of the drug.

"You are right," she said. "The Holthsworths of Glendarragh held their heads high, even though the Curse hung heavy over them. I am the last — the last — of the race, unless Miriam — are you Miriam?" she suddenly asked.

There was no reply. The physician looked at the young girl, and then at the patient.

"It would be strange if Miriam — little Myrrha," continued the old woman, "should come back to me at last. Very strange! And yet — why?" she almost cried, looking inquiringly from one to another.

"There," said the physician, soothingly. "I shall send you a cooling draught. The hot air is stifling you."

"The hot air?" she said. "Am I then in Hell?"

Miriam shuddered. The doctor said: —

"I think I must send you a nurse from the hospital even for the few hours she has to live. You look worn and tired."

But Miriam begged that he should not. She would watch by her patient to the end.

"Very good!" said the physician. "At least," he whispered, "when all is over, you must allow me to send some of our people to perform the last offices."

"Yes! most certainly," said Miriam. "I shall gladly avail of that offer."

When he departed, and Miriam again bent over her patient, she was again met by the eager question: —

"Who are you? And why am I here?"

"You are here because I choose to nurse you," said Miriam. "Now rest, dear, and — cannot you say some prayers of your Church?"

"Your Church?" repeated the dying woman. "Then you are not Miriam, my Miriam? She wouldn't have spoken thus!"

"No matter!" said Miriam. "See! I shall pray with you, if you like. Come! Let us say the 'Our Father' together!"

And she repeated the holy words with the invalid.

"Say the 'Hail Mary' now," said her mother. "Or better, take out your beads, and say the Rosary for me!"

"Alas! I cannot," said Miriam, weeping. "I was never taught it."

"Ah, then! you are not Miriam, my little Miriam," said her mother. "For I taught Myrrha all her dear little Catholic prayers. Come, Myrrha, come! Now, put your little hands together, and close your eyes. There! Say now after me: 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!' Go on, child! I fear, little one, you don't love your prayers. You want your doll, or Ian to play with. But, you must not play any more with Ian, dearest, because his mother hates Catholics. It is their religion, dear, to hate, to hate! Ha! You are crying: and you are not Miriam!"

"But I am! I am!" cried the girl, in a paroxysm of weeping. "I am Miriam — Miriam Lucas! and you are my long-lost — Oh! my God! help me to say it! — you are my mother!"

"Oh!" said the dying woman. "How strange! And did you get my packet from Anstie Carroll? I gave it to that girl for you. It was my will, my deed. I gave you — but you are not Miriam Lucas! I gave Miriam all my rights in Glendarragh! You know Holthsworth wanted to defraud me of it; but he could not, he could not. It was mine, mine; and I have given it to Miriam. Who had a better right, I should like to know! Hark! what is that?"

She had heard the first faint rumblings of the thunder in the distance, and the blue, broad flashes were playing athwart the window.

"It is that eternal roar of the city," she said, "and that beastly electric light. Ah! for a sound of the sea beneath the cliffs at Glendarragh!"

Then the action of the drug on the heart ceased; and the current of life running feebly through the brain, her thoughts began to wander again.

"Holthsworth! He wanted me to marry him, and take me away from Edwin. But no! no! And there was a Curse! No child should ever be born there; and no song of bird should ever be heard. And Edwin — someone said he was dead. Not dead; oh no! unless Holthsworth killed him. I'll go back, and take away the Curse. What was it to them, if I became a Catholic? But Myrrha! Well! was I going to allow my child to be damned and unbaptised? It was all Holthsworth! He wanted Glendarragh. He wanted everything! 'What hands you have, Jennie! They are whiter than unveined alabaster!' Ah! but they struck him, struck him on the face, the coward! Ha! Ha! A woman's little hand can do strange things, I guess! But, where am I? And who are you? There's that d—d electric flare again."

The deep-mouthed thunder rolled high above the city; and the flashes played swift and blue across the sky.

"That's the roll of the sea," she said, "down there on the beach. How hollow it sounds. I hope none of the men are out tonight; or the Curse might fall. It is so bad to be cursed, especially the curse of the sea. That's awful! There's no curse, like the curse of the sea! Hark! again, how the waves thunder on the beach! And that light is their crests as they break! God grant that there is no one out tonight!"

And Miriam was praying softly — praying in some dumb, dim way, to some unseen and unknown Power, who, she felt, held her destinies in Its Hand. It was all so strange, so terrible. She looked at her watch. It pointed to eleven o'clock. She remembered the doctor's words: —

"She cannot possibly survive the night!"

She felt that she ought to pray for, and with, the invalid in this supreme hour; but she knew not how. She leaned over and said: —

"Mother!"

"Who called? Who said 'Mother'?" cried the dying woman.

"I — don't you know me — Miriam Lucas — your —" she gasped at the word — "your daughter?"

"No! no!" said the dying woman. "That's impossible! Oh! How I am suffocated! There is something here filling up all my breast, I cannot breathe! But — you — are — not — Miriam! No!"

She stopped to gather breath, for her poor, withered chest was heaving pitifully, as she tried to gasp out her words.

"Look!" she said. "You are good — and — kind — and you — are — a lady. I want to tell you something! Miriam was here; but — she — is — gone — home — home! She sought me everywhere; but — how — could — she — find me — in this city? She's gone home; but — hark! she'll — come back again; and — we shall all — go home — together. There is the — thunder of the surf again! What — does it — say? The Curse — of Glendarragh! The Curse of Glendarragh!"

Quite exhausted and worn by the effort, she lay gasping on her pillow, which Miriam gently raised, whilst she moistened the dying lips with a little eau-de-Cologne.

The minutes slowly succeeded one another now, broken only in their flight by the peals and reverberations of the thunder; and the lightning flashes, now become vivid and red as the storm grew in intensity. But Miriam had no nerves now to be affrighted by the storm. She was face to face with so terrible a drama, that the play of Nature was unheeded, although the house seemed to rock to its foundations.

A little after midnight, the final change came. Several flashes of lightning in quick succession lighted up the death-chamber, and seemed to quiver around the bed of the dying woman. And then peal after peal of thunder

rocked the house, and shook the windows, and then grumbled away far down the sky. And on the echo of the last peal of thunder, the soul of Auntie Jennie seemed to go out, as she muttered: —

“The Curse of Glendarragh! The Curse of Glendarragh!”

And Miriam Lucas sat still there in the darkness and the midnight, pondering on Fate and Destiny, and the ways of mortals in this world; and thinking how strange and tragic was her own life, and how different from the ordinary lot of womanhood; and wondering how a life, cast in such untoward circumstances was likely to end.

In the morning, hospital nurses were at the door, according to the doctor's promise; and swiftly and deftly they took the arrangements of Death from the hands of the stricken girl; and early in the day, a priest called from the neighbouring church, to carry out the promise made by his confrère that the Purgatorian Society of the Parish would assume all further responsibility about the obsequies of the dead.

This priest, advanced in years, and brusque in manner, after announcing his intention to relieve Miriam from all further responsibility, suddenly asked her: —

“Might I ask if you are acquainted with a girl named Carroll?”

Miriam said yes! that the girl had been her servant in Ireland; and that she had met her here.

“She is now on her way to Ireland, if she has not already reached it,” said the priest. “She had a packet for you, which I saw. It was a deed duly executed by your mother, and transferring some property to you. She showed it to me, because I was somewhat incredulous about her history as she narrated it!”

“Who could have told her that I had gone back to Ireland?” asked Miriam.

“I'm sure I don't know,” said the priest. “But I should say — I presume you are a Roman Catholic, Miss Lucas?”

"I don't know," said Miriam. "My mother," she pointed to the dead woman, "has plainly said, that I was baptised in that faith. In fact, it has been the cause of her misery and sin. But I have been brought up without religion — except the religion of Christ!"

"Oh, well, that is Catholicity!" said the priest.

"I'm not sure," said Miriam. "I know nothing of creeds. But it was the words of Christ spoken by one of your priests, that led me to the place where I met my mother. I had been separated from her in childhood, and had been seeking for her since I came to know aught of her history."

"You cannot regret having met her thus?" he said.

"Oh, no! no," said Miriam. "It was not what I expected; but, perhaps, it was best."

"I knew Auntie Jennie well," he said. "She was more sinned against than sinning. But alas! That is no excuse. It is so true of all. It is a world of hate!"

"But the message that I heard, and the message that led me to my mother, was a message, nay, a command of love. Why is not that command obeyed?"

"Because it would upset all ideas of modern civilisation," said the priest. "And everyone takes it for granted that that must not be done. We mustn't go back, not even to Christ!"

"I cannot understand," said Miriam, wearily.

"Nor can I," said the priest. Then, as if anxious to avoid the subject, he added: —

"I take it that you leave all arrangements for interment in our hands, Miss Lucas?"

"Yes!" she said. "I am utterly helpless."

He was going away, but suddenly recollected something.

"By the way, there's a young street waif over in the hospital. He has pneumonia. How he got it, I cannot conjecture. Weather has no effect on these half-naked gamins. But he is calling for Miss Lucas; and the doctor says he is feverish, as if he had something on his mind. I wonder could you see him?"

"Certainly!" said Miriam. "I suppose it is Coyote. May I leave everything here in your hands?"

"Certainly," he said. "The remains will be removed to our Church in the evening. To-morrow, we shall have Mass said; and the interment can take place in Calvary, immediately after, or if you desire to postpone it."

She locked her rooms; and, having received directions from the priest, she went straight to the hospital.

XLIII

ANSTIE CARROLL'S RETURN

THE same terrific storm, that had blown up from the southwest on which the soul of Auntie Jennie had gone out had swept away some old sashes and windows in the house at Glendarragh; but otherwise, left it intact. Its massive walls and heavy roof could resist a fiercer impact. It brought back, however, to the minds of the villagers that other hurricane, which swept over sea and land that evening, when Anstie Carroll and Declan Ahern were swept out to sea, and when old Mr. Lucas, the last tenant of the fated mansion was lost. And the people, as they cowered over their fires that awful night, spoke in whispers of the "Curse of Glendarragh," and many a conjecture was made about the old man, who had so suddenly disappeared from human view, and the sweet young girl, who was lost to them, and of whose fate no record had reached the village. In their simple lives these were events of historical importance, that were referred to again and again as the greatest and most solemn facts within their experience.

James Carroll and Dave Ahern, now very old and feeble, crouched over the wood-fire in the cottage of the latter. The wind howled dismally outside, and moaned dismally down through the wide, open chimney, sometimes even catching the sparks, and scattering them over the hearth, whilst now and again, drops of rain fell and hissed on the burning embers, and threw up little jets of steam amidst the curling smoke. Declan was mending nets under the light of a paraffin lamp in a corner, thinking of many things.

"'Tis quare that Anstie should be in me head so much

tonight," said old James Carroll, after a long pause. "Sometimes I do forget her altogether; and thin she comes back; and I think I see her right before me. I suppose 'tis the gale that reminds me of her so much tonight."

"Whisht," said Dave Ahern, throwing his thumb over his shoulder towards Declan. "Sure 'tis a bad nigh intirely," he continued, deftly turning the conversation; "a bad night intirely for thim that are on the say."

"Nothin' under a liner could live in that gale," said James Carroll. "You couldn't keep a vessel's head to the wind without smashing her helm into smithereens."

"I'm afraid," said Dave Ahern, "that we'll hear of bad work to-morrow. If Ballycroneen does not ketch some vessel in her grip, 'tis the quare story intirely."

"'Tis a bad spot. Where are you goin'?" he exclaimed, as Declan flung down the net, and lifted the door-latch.

"Nowhere," said Declan, as he pushed to the door, and vanished in the darkness.

"'Twas Anstie kem into his head," continued James Carroll. "There's never a capful of wind blows but the poor fellow does be thinking of what happened."

"He'll never get over it till he sees her living or dead; so I hard him say," replied his father. "He's never been right since."

The young man, stirred by the reminiscences evoked by his father's words, had plunged into the darkness and the storm, not knowing nor caring whither he went. The howling wind, the terrific seas, that tossed madly outside the little bay, and then broke into thunderous cataracts against the barrier of shingle that guarded the sea-wall, the blackness and the terror of the night — all helped to recall that awful night, when in his madness, he had driven both himself and Anstie well-nigh to destruction. He went on blindly to the end of the beach; and, driven by some hidden impulse, he clambered up the cliff, where hidden on that fatal evening, he had watched with jealous eyes and a heart full of hatred Jack Motherway and the

girl who had spurned him so contemptuously. He threw himself against the wind to steady himself, and tried to recall that evening and all its gloomy associations. Then he sped onward, onward for miles, until at last exhausted with his conflict against the storm, he flung himself down on the wet turf to rest. He had almost fallen asleep, when he thought he heard the siren of a steamship in the distance, but nearer to the village, and again the same hoarse boom, and again. He started up to run homeward; but stopped, put his fingers in his ears, and shouted: —

“Let them drown! Let every one drown, and be d—d! But Anstie! Anstie! Come back! come back!”

In the grey morning, news came to Dave Ahern's cottage, that a liner, one of the smaller boats of a German Company, had got fast jammed on the rocks of Ballycrooneen; that nearly all hands were lost; and that 'already five bodies had been picked up on the rocks, and carried to the old house at Glendarragh to await the Coroner's inquest. Relays of men had been selected to watch the dead; and James Carroll and Dave Ahern were appointed to the watch that night from nine to twelve o'clock.

It was no congenial task, this vigil with the dead in a lonely and deserted mansion, especially with the unknown and unlamented. If it were their own dead, but — well, thank God! it wasn't that. There is a compensation somewhere in all circumstances of trial and pain.

“If that Crowner from over Fermoy knew his juty,” said Dave Ahern, “he could have held his inques' today; and the crachures could be berried at once, as is only right and proper.”

“Maybe he hadn't worrd in time,” said James Carroll. “’Tis manny a long mile from here to Fermoy.”

“And why didn't he get the Coast Guards from Poorhead to watch 'em?” said Dave Ahern. “They're paid well for their work.”

“I understan' they're watchin' the wreck,” said James

Carroll. "Whin she breaks up, there'll be the power an' all of things washed ashore."

"Well, 'tis a job I don't like," said Dave Ahern, "alone with dead corpses in the middle of the night."

"Lave me go, father," said Declan, who was listening. "Nayther the dead nor the living can scare me now."

"Whatever you like, Dec," said his father. "Are you afraid, James?"

"Me afraid?" said James Carroll, bridling up. "Who said I was afraid?"

"Well, no matter," said his old friend. "Only take yer prayer-books, an' a dhrop of holy wather wid ye."

"Begobs, I think if we had a dhrop of sperrits too," said James Carroll, "'twouldn't be no harrum."

"That same ye can have," said Dave. "There's plinty in the black bottle there in the cupboard; and plinty more where that kem from."

The moon was well-risen, and glowed amongst the thick trunks of the trees that skirted Glendarragh on the eastern side, as the two men crossed the gravelled, but now grass-grown terrace, that led up to the great house. Their shadows fell amongst the shadows of the trees, and a woodquest fluted out her dismal *Too-whoo! Too-whoo! Too-whoo! Too!!* The front of the house was wrapped in deep darkness; and through the darkness the gaping windows made a deeper blackness, unrelieved by gleam of candle or lamp. It was an eerie scene; and its solemnity was enhanced by the ghostly errand on which the two men were sent, and the exaggeration of their own fears and superstitions.

"'Tis a lonesome looking place," said James Carroll.

"'Tis God's work!" said Declan.

"I wondher are the min gone a-yet?" said the old man. He was hoping they might be still on the watch; and that their very presence would nerve him.

They had left. One or two empty glasses, and the strong odour of tobacco-smoke alone indicated that a

watch had been kept in the spacious, but unfurnished kitchen, at the rear of the house.

"I wondher where are thim? — the corpses, I mane," he questioned, looking around the dreary place.

"Upstairs!" said Declan. "They're laid out on a few dale boords on thrastles."

"The Lord ha' mercy on them!" said James Carroll; "an' give us all the grace of a happy death, an' a favourable judgment!"

"Amin!" said Declan. "Let us begin the night well, by sayin' the Rosary; an' thin we can take things aisy."

They knelt down, the old man and the young, and taking out their rude beads, they recited in alternat measures the Rosary for the dead. Then they rose up strengthened, and began the preparations for the dreary night-watch.

"Are we supposed to be above wid thim," said James Carroll, pointing to the ceiling; "or to remain here?"

"The coroner didn't say nothin' about that," said Declan. "He only axed a few hands to volunteer to watch the dead."

"I suppose 'tis an act of charity, an' that we'll have our reward," said the old man.

"'Tis wan of the five corporeal works of mercy," said Declan, "so the priest said; and somethin' else about a man who lef' his dinner behind him to bury the dead."

The old man was anxious to prolong the conversation, whilst Declan, following his usual habits, preferred silence, when both were startled and appalled by an unearthly shriek that seemed to proceed from the death-chamber, and to echo round and round the lonely house. They looked at one another in a regular paralysis of fright, their faces white and rigid, not knowing what to think. Again, the shriek rang out, this time, with an echo of mocking laughter that was frightful. At the same time, there came to the ears of the frightened men, a sound as of soft feet, pattering over the floor above their heads.

"Come away in God Almighty's name," said the old man, half frantic with terror. "There's somethin' not right upstairs."

"The dead don't walk like that!" said Declan. "'Tis some dog has got in; or 'tis an owl that's —"

He could not complete the sentence, for again that horrible laughter broke forth, this time apparently coming down the front stairs, because they heard the soft thud of unshod feet coming, or rather leaping down the wooden steps.

"Baste or divil, I'll see who it is!" said Declan, taking up the light, and passing through the broad door into the hall. As he did, a dark figure, like that of a huge hound, leaped down the remaining steps, and plunged through the wide door, into the moonlight carrying with it the same unearthly sounds that had frightened the watchers, and that now echoed down along the lonely avenue, and seemed to be lost out to sea.

"Bad luck to you, Coppal, you fool!" said Declan, returning to the kitchen. "I might have known it," he said to James Carroll. "'Twas only that fool, who's everywhere, but where he ought to be. But I am afeard nayther you nor I will sleep much tonight!"

That was not the case, however; because, after a little while, when the fear of ghosts had evaporated, and the small black bottle had been opened once or twice, the old man, leaning his head on the kitchen table, fell into a deep sleep. Declan smoked in silence for a long time, sometimes getting up, and crossing the hall and even going out into the moonlight; then returning and sitting by the sleeping man, but always wondering and conjecturing what Coppal could have been doing with the dead.

"'Twas a quare notion," he thought; "but then everything the fool does is quare. I suppose 'twas keening he was over the corpses, as there was nothin' he could stale."

By degrees, a desire came upon him to see the dead himself. If Coppal had no fear, and had even an attraction towards these poor drowned people, why should he?

He supposed they were foreigners, or rich Americans, or returning Englishmen; and it would be a curiosity to see them, and to be able to describe them before they were finally hidden from sight. He knew there was no use in asking the old man to accompany him; and he spent an hour debating with himself what he should do. By degrees the desire became irresistible. He felt he should lose an opportunity that would be swiftly snatched away, if he could not see the dead before midnight.

At last with some trepidation, he passed into the hall, and made his way up the great staircase. The large empty bedroom, where the dead were placed was lighted by two windows, one facing the south, and one the east; and through the latter, the moonlight now streamed showing with ghastly precision the still and awful figures of the dead. There was a slight odour of sea-water, blended with the smell of incipient decomposition in the room; but the faces of the dead were as placid as the mute landscape outside, now silent under the ghostly moonlight. Three corpses were placed near the door, one a little further back; and one lengthwise, at the feet of the three first figures.

The three corpses, that lay parallel to each other near the door, and were fully bathed in the moonlight that now streamed through the unglazed window, were figures of men — two of them, rough sailors, clad in the deep blue cloth of the service; the other, that of a passenger of some position, for his saturated clothes were of a superior make and texture. The figure that lay crosswise at their feet was that of a woman, or fullgrown girl. Her face was hidden in the deep shadow. The solitary corpse near the other window was that of a boy — cabin-boy, or cook's assistant, also clothed in navy blue. They all lay so still and calm, with the peace of death on their features, and their pale hands clasped on their breasts, that all sense of fear left Declan's bosom, and gave way, to a feeling of deepest pity and reverence.

"God pity thim!" he said, as he watched the bars of

darkness made by the window-sashes pass slowly across their pallid features. "They say drownin' is an aisy death; and they look it! But sure 'tis a quare kind of wake they're havin' — not a mother's sowl but meself to say a prayer for thim!"

Then he thought that they were surely Protestants from America or England; and that they needed no prayer; and to verify the suspicion, he looked closer to detect some signs that would indicate the religion of the dead. There were none. The three sailors were tattooed on their wrists and arms; the hands of the other corpse were white and unmarked. He passed around, and looked for the first time carefully at the drowned girl. The dress around her neck was slightly open and unhooked; and across the whiteness of her neck was unmistakably the string of a brown scapular.

"Ah, me poor girl!" said Declan, "I knew you wor wan of oursels."

He stooped down, and looked at the darkened face. It was slightly turned from him, and the brown eyes were partially open, whilst the long, luxurious hair swept down, and the floor was wet with the weeping of it.

"Mother of God, keep me in me sinses now," he exclaimed, "or take thim away for ever!"

He gently and reverently drew around the face of the poor, dead girl. It yielded with the pathetic obedience of the dead, and seemed to look upwards at him. It was slightly swollen and darkened, and looked aged to Declan's eyes; but there was unmistakably the gracious forehead, the great brown eyes, the parted mouth he knew so well. He gazed in fear and dread for a while; and then he whispered softly:—

"Anstie!"

No answer came from the open lips.

"Anstie!" he whispered again, bending lower over the dead silent face, as if she were merely unconscious, and his voice could bring her back to reason: "Anstie, don't you know me? Don't you know Declan?"

The dumb face stared silently upwards.

"Oh, my God! my God!" he cried, "this is too much! Anstie, won't you spake? Sure your father is below and wants to see you. Spake only wan word to me, an' I'll call him!"

In vain. No sound came from the parted lips, no responsive light came into the eyes. He suffered the cold, heavy head to tilt back into the old position, and fell grovelling in agony upon the floor.

How long he remained in speechless agony there he could not tell; but at last he was awakened by the shouts of the old man in the room beneath. Then, his own grief gave way before the thought how he could break the dreadful news to Anstie's father. He suddenly roused himself, and began to think; and then a doubt crossed his mind. Perhaps he was mistaken. The place was dark: the moonlight blurred the vision of things. It might have been only a hideous suspicion. He rose up. The moon had gone higher in the heavens; and now threw its full light upon the face of the dead girl. No! there was no mistaking the revelation. Anstie had answered his passionate cries, and had come back.

He stole gently down the stairs, and met the old man in the hall. Querulous from his sleep, and his anger at being left alone in such a place, the old man, holding a candle in his hands was about to give way to one of his usual fits of anger, but something in the boy's face stopped him. It was a blending of sorrow and terror that instantly drove speech from the old man's lips.

"Is it twelve o'clock?" said Declan.

"It must be near it," said James Carroll. "'Tis time to go home whatever."

"Come and say a prayer for the dead before we go," said Declan.

"Can't we say it down here?" said the old man.

"Not so well as when we see 'em," answered Declan.

"Bring up the candle wid you."

Slowly and heavily the old man ascended the stairs,

Declan leading the way. The latter had now determined to let the old man see for himself. They entered the room together, and the first object on which the lantern fell was the dead girl. Her face was turned from the light, but the moon was shining full upon it.

"Poor girl!" said the old man, peering down, and holding the candle aloft. "See, Deck, she must be a Catholic. Look at her scaffer."

He turned around, and saw the boy silently weeping.

"How tindher you are!" he said; "tho' indeed an' indeed, 'twould make the stones cry."

Here a loud sob from Declan made the old man start with an exclamation.

"Eh?" he said, looking suspiciously at Declan. The latter came over silently, and bending down he turned around with his two hands gently the face of the dead girl.

"There!" he said. "God help you and me this blessed night!"

"Yerra, what ails you, boy?" said the old man. "What's comin' over you, at all, at all?"

He looked suspiciously at Declan, as if suspecting a recurrence of his malady. At the same time, he averted his face from the dead girl, as if he dreaded a revelation.

"'Tis God's judgment! 'Tis God's judgment!" cried the boy. "I said: Let them drown! Let all the world drown, if only Anstie would come back! An' Anstie has come back, more's the sorra for you an' me!"

"What Anstie? What ails you?" said the old man, now thoroughly alarmed. "You don't mane our Anstie, Anstie Carroll?"

"Look, an' see for yerself," said the boy. "Sure you should know her betther than me!"

James Carroll, now thoroughly roused, bent over, and studied the features of the girl. Then, when there was no longer any room for doubt, he raised his head, and looked pitifully and complainingly to Heaven. Again, stooping down, he showered passionate kisses on the dead

mute face, whilst his hot tears washed it, and many an old Irish endearing expression murmured from his lips.

"You wor always afraid of the say, alanna," he cried, "and shure you wor right. The say caught you at last. You used to say it wos so big, and strong, and terrible, whin it caught you up, and flung you on the sands. An' shure you escaped it wance, and it wos watchin' you, watchin' you, to get a hould of you agin. And, oh my God! at yer own dure, within a few yards of where you wor borned and rared. Tonight you said, alanna, to-night I'll be home again; an' I'll see all the ould nabors, and the ould places, an' me poor father, an' the bhoy who wos fonder of me than all —"

Here Declan moaned and sobbed as if his heart would break.

"An' I'll settle down in the ould home agin, an' never lave it, nor kith, nor kin, nor counthry ever agin: an' look, jest at the thrishol', the hungry say comes up, an' claims you: an' God let it, an' God let it!"

The half-blasphemy stunned him for a moment, and brought him back to his senses.

"Praised an' blessed be his Holy Name!" he cried. "Shure we have no right to complain. How do we know? How do we know? Shure whin God tuk her He knew what wos best!"

He remained silent for a long while; and not a sound was heard in the death-chamber, but the stifled sobs of Declan, who still lay prostrate on the ground. Once more the old man looked down at his dead child; and this time he started back, whilst an angry exclamation broke from his lips.

"Look here! Look here, Deck! some one has robbed her. Some awful villain has tampered wid my dead child!"

Declan jumped to his feet, and looked. Yes! the inner pocket of the girl's long blue coat was evidently rifled, for the lining was pulled out, and apparently torn, as if some one had been surprised in the act of desecrating the

dead. Then they noticed that her white blouse also had been rudely torn open, and rifled, because the silk was stained brown as if by very dirty hands, and the buttons had been dragged away.

"Who was the hellfire ruffian," said the old man, in a fury, that dissipated every milder feeling of sorrow, "that tampered wid me child? Wait, an' see, if the hand of God don't rest heavy on him here and hereafter. Oh my God! drowned and robbed. Oh, Anstie, Anstie!"

"It couldn't be thim coast-guards," said Declan, who was now growing very excited. "They might have kep' her purse and belongings — no!" as the sudden revelation struck him, "it was that d—d fool and rogue Cop-pal. Wait, till I meet him. I'll smash every bone in his body." And he struck the rude boards fiercely.

"Yes, but what would the poor fool take?" said the old man.

"Take? he'd take anything he could lay his hands on," said Declan. "He'd stale the pinny from the hands of the blind man at the chapel-dure! But the dead! the dead! to rob the dead! An' our own Anstie! our own Anstie! But," he continued in a whisper, as grief and anger drowned once more the light of reason in his mind, "she's not dead at all, Sir! She's only purtending, to take a rise out of us. Look at her! Sure, don't you see? If she wor dead, she wouldn't look that way at all, at all! Whisht! Whisht! Don't wake her. She's tired after her long journey, poor thing. Let her sleep, an' thin, I'll show you," he continued in a still lower whisper, "where we'll put her, an' she can sleep for ever an' ever!"

XLIV

THE INEVITABLE

WHEN Miriam reached the Hospital, and inquired if there were a boy there who wished to see Miss Lucas, she was directed towards a certain nurse, who met her with a smile.

"Yes," she said at once. "The little lad is in agony at the thought that he might die without seeing you. He seems to have something on his mind."

She led the way along a narrow corridor, redolent with odours of chemicals; and opening a door she ushered Miriam into a large ward, nearly full of patients, young and old. Far up in a corner, on a neat, white bed, was Coyote.

Miriam blushed when she found a hundred eyes turned towards her as she entered; but she followed the nurse, with downcast eyes until she reached the cot where Coyote was drawing painful suspirations from lungs heavily charged with blood and mucus.

The eyes of the boy rested on her face for a moment, and then he began to blubber and cry piteously. Miriam came near, and sitting on the chair by the bedside, she gently smoothed the wet and tangled hair of the boy, and chafed his forehead with her soft hands. He was still so choked with emotion that he could not speak, and the nurse said gently:—

"Now, my boy, here is the lady you were crying for all night! Now, say everything you would wish to say before the doctor comes round. He won't allow much talking, you know!"

And the nurse went away.

"Well, Coy," said Miriam, gently soothing him, "you wanted to see me. Of course I'd have come in any case

to see you if I had heard you were ill. But the priest told me you had something to tell me!"

"You'll kill me!" blubbered Coy, in his agony. "But I wanted to keep you. And she wanted youse to go away!"

"Very good!" said Miriam. "You're speaking about the girl that called when I was from home?"

"Ye-es," said the boy, gasping out his words in pain. "She said she wanted to see youse, and — an' — she founded yer mudder, and —"

Here he broke into convulsions of weeping.

"Well, well, 'tis all right," said Miriam. "I have found my mother all the same."

The boy put his arm across his eyes and turned his face away.

"Well, what else have you to tell me?" said Miriam, anxious to get home and see after the last offices that should be paid to the dead.

But the nurse came over and said: —

"I'm afraid I must interrupt you, Miss Lucas, the doctors have just come in to make their rounds, and will probably begin here."

"Nurse!" blubbered the boy.

The nurse came over and bent down.

"Tell her — Miss Lucas," he whispered, although Miriam heard every word, "to take her eyes off of me. She hyppernetises me, an' I can't tell her!"

"All right, my boy," said the nurse, smiling. "He'd like to tell you something else," she said, turning to Miriam, "but you must look at me!"

And then Coyote, his arm still over his eyes, blubbered: —

"An' she said she had a package or somethink fer you; and that she should give it inter yer own han's; but I said you'd gone away to Oireland, an' 'twas a whopper!"

"But *why* didn't you tell the truth?" said Miriam, rising. "It makes no difference now, Coy. But you should have told the truth."

"I was afeard!" said the boy.

"Afraid of what?" asked Miriam.

"Afeard," he said, "dat you'd go away, an' never come back no more; an' — an' —"

"And what?" said Miriam, smiling.

"'Twould kill me! It would!" said the boy, in agonies of shame and sorrow.

The girl was deeply touched, especially as just then her heart was heavy with emotion at the thought of her bereavement, her loneliness, the uncertainty of her future.

"Will he recover?" she whispered to the nurse as a new interest for the lad arose in her heart.

"I think he will!" said the nurse. "But here come the doctors. They will tell you."

Miriam turned round, and within a few feet of her, standing by the side of the house-surgeon, was Hugh Ireton. She recognised him at once; but, whether her brief residence in America had wrought some change in her appearance, or whether it was that his thoughts were far away from her at the moment, he didn't seem for a moment to know her. Then the recognition came, sudden and almost stupefying; and he had to make an effort to control his emotion as he stepped forward and held out his hand. Miriam had flushed a little, then grown pale, under the influx of sudden emotion kindled by the sense of her sorrows, her powerlessness, her abandonment, and this sudden and seemingly miraculous apparition of the one being on earth who could rescue her, and on whom she could lean for evermore. She held out her hand, when he proffered his, and unconsciously, but yet with a meaning that was fully revealed to herself, she allowed her hand to rest in his strong palm. A mighty instinct told him what it meant, as his fingers closed upon hers. It said plainly — confidence, reliance, self-forgetfulness, dependence, abandonment! He flushed beneath the revelation, and then only he found words to say: —

"Miss Lucas. What a pleasure!"

"Yes!" she said, simply, "it is a pleasure to meet friends in a strange land!"

The house-surgeon and nurse were already bending over the sick boy; and Miriam, to relieve her embarrassment, said to Ireton:—

"Will he recover, do you think?"

Ireton understood and went over to see the lad, and consult with his brother-physician. After a long and careful examination, the house-surgeon rose up and said:—

"He's more feverish than he ought to be. He has had some excitement!"

"Yes!" said Miriam. "The lad was in my employment; and I came to see him."

"Had he any trouble, any mental worry?" asked the surgeon.

"Yes!" said Miriam. "But I can easily remove it."

And bending over the boy she said:—

"Now, Coy, that's all forgiven and forgotten. Get well as quick as you can. I want to take you with me to Ireland!"

"Youse cheesing me now," said Coyote, sulkily. "Can't you leave a feller alone?"

"I'm quite serious," said Miriam. Then a happy thought struck her.

"See here! This gentleman has come all the way from Ireland to take *me* back. We'll all go together!"

"Holy Moses!" said Coyote, "but I am all right now. Look here, Nuss, git me my clothes; and lemme git up!"

"Not so fast, young man," said the surgeon. "Not so fast! But keep quiet and you'll be ready to travel in a fortnight."

"Oh!" groaned Coyote. "An' they'll be runned away an' leave me here!"

"No!" said Miriam, coming over and bending down over the sick boy. Ireton was in a moment at her side. "I promise you Mr. Ireton and I will wait for you!"

"Sure?" said the boy.

"Quite sure," said Miriam.

"Then, Doc, all right! I'll wait!" said Coyote.

"I guess you will," said the doctor, laughing.

Ireton had been wiping the perspiration from the boy's forehead with a white handkerchief. He turned it out and smoothed it, and there in a corner was the letter M.

"You remember it?" he said to Miriam. "I stole it the day we staunched Dwyer's leg at Glendarragh."

There were a few moments' silence, as the doctors and nurses moved away to the other beds. Then Ireton, almost tremblingly said:—

"Miriam?"

"Yes!" she said.

"You meant—did you mean?—what you said to the boy just now—that I was come to take you back to Ireland?"

"Yes!" said Miriam.

"You quite understand all that that means to me?" he urged, lest there should be a loophole of escape.

"Quite," she said. And then:—"I was looking for you, Hugh, all this time back. I knew you'd come."

"God be thanked!" he said.

He was too full of grateful emotion to say more just then; but he affected to be solicitous about the boy. Then the time came to leave.

As they moved, side by side, along the hospital ward, Ireton whispered:—

"Do you know, Miriam, that I have been elected Dispensary Doctor at Glendarragh; and that it was entirely owing to you. The rule is to elect a Roman Catholic, and very properly; but the people got it into their heads, I'm sure I don't know how, that I was to go in search of you, and bring you back to them, and they waived all claims to effect that purpose. You—that is we, you have privileged me now to say it, Miriam—are to go back and lift the 'Curse' from Glendarragh."

"Poor, faithful people," she murmured. "At least,

Hugh, you are taking them home a Catholic wife. I have been baptised a Roman Catholic."

For a moment he was surprised; then he said, honestly:—

"I'm right glad to hear it, Miriam. Ashley, I see, was right. And he maintains also that Glendarragh is yours — yours from the hills to the sea; that your poor father had no claim over it, and therefore Holthsworth has no right to act even as agent or trustee."

"Quite true! And now, I must tell you all. Otherwise, you cannot be what I hope, what I want you to be, my helper, my protector. Am I supposing too much?"

"No, no, no!" he cried, eagerly. "You have given me all I ever hoped for on earth, Miriam. I can only make you a poor return."

"Come, then!" she said.

He made some hasty arrangements with the house-surgeon, with whom he was staying; and then set forward with Miriam. She looked hastily at her watch, and then, instead of taking him to her lodgings, she led him to the Church quite close by, whither the charitable society, whose duty it is to see after the decent obsequies of the poor, had already transferred the remains of Auntie Jennie.

Quite unaccustomed as she was to Catholic Churches and ceremonies, yet she felt on entering this Church that she was at home. The poor were all around, and that was enough. The two went slowly, and quite unnoticed up the long aisle; and then, Miriam saw, in a little chapel to the right, what she rightly conjectured to be the coffin of her mother. It was surrounded by six large unbleached wax tapers; and, to her utter astonishment, it was almost covered with flowers. She stooped down, after a moment's gasp of surprise, and whispered to an old woman who was telling her beads near the coffin:—

"Whose remains are here?"

"Wisha, thin, it is poor Auntie Jennie, Miss," was the reply. "May God have mercy on her sowl!"

"And who put these flowers on her coffin?" she questioned.

"Wisha, some poor crachures like herself," said the woman. "Sure, whin she had it, she shared it with many like herself."

Miriam said no more; but kneeling down, she said some wild, inarticulate prayer for her dead mother. Then, she explained to the astonished Ireton: —

"That's my mother's coffin. I found her at last; but O my God! what a finding!"

She was so overwhelmed with shame and pity that Ireton dared not break in on her sorrow. He felt that there was some terrific revelation there in the darkness of that coffin, and he was silent. And Miriam, too, had decided that, cost her what it might, she should tell all to the man whose whole life now, she knew, had been entirely devoted to her. She asked him to walk by her side along the broad, deserted pavement that lay between the Church and the street; and there, her face averted, with many an ill-suppressed sob, she narrated how she had sought her mother, her meeting with Anstie Carroll, her struggle for existence, her adoption of the little street-waif; her accidental visit to the Italian Church, and the words she heard there; her finding of her mother in the gaol-bird and drunkard; and then the last revelations.

"You are aware," she said, "of the strange mystery that always hung over my life. Yet, like all mysteries, it is easy of explanation, at least so far as I have been able to piece details together from my mother's ravings, and from what I have otherwise heard. Our people were the owners of Glendarragh. They were Holthsworths. Whether they were the hereditary owners, the descendants of those through whom that awful curse has followed the family, I don't know. Perhaps they purchased the place. But, in any case it was my mother's personal property. Mr. Holthsworth, of whom you have heard —"

"Rather!" said Ireton, savagely. "I shall be surprised if Arthur hasn't something to say to him yet!"

"Well, he was my mother's cousin, and I think, from her remarks, he must have paid her some attention. How she met my poor father I cannot discover. But they were married, and he brought her into a very narrow set of sectarians — those people, who, in the name of religion, think themselves bound to hate and despise. Well, for some reason, my mother chose to become a Roman Catholic. It is a common occurrence, is it not?"

"In England, I believe, it is very common," said Ireton. "It is not so usual in Ireland!"

"Well," continued Miriam, "she followed her conscience, and then — you can imagine the rest. But the real trouble came when I was born, and according to the ways of mothers, I was baptised in my mother's faith. From that day forth — I am only conjecturing, you know, and building up my hypothesis on what I have heard — there was no peace. I can see it all. I know what malice lies deep in the human heart, especially where there is religious hatred. I can see my mother driven from her home; I can see her drifting, drifting down the terrible tide of sin. I can see her despair, her heart breaking. I know she yearned for me, as I for her. Yes! as some priest here has said, she was more sinned against than sinning. She is at rest. It was something that her last moments should have been soothed by me!"

And the strong woman wept softly. Ireton was silent, with the deference of sympathy and respect.

"It appears," continued Miriam, after a pause, "that she had always kept with her some papers relating to Glendarragh, even in gaol; these she gave to that young girl, Anstie Carroll, of whom I spoke. The girl has gone back to Ireland. She was faithful, I'm sure. She called to my room; but that little lad in the hospital, dreading that I should go away and leave him, told her I had gone to Ireland, and she, as she thought, poor girl, followed me. In her hands, wherever she is, are all the documents about the property in Glendarragh."

"Well, then, Miriam," said Ireton, "it is quite clear

that we have no time to lose here, as soon as the last offices are paid to your mother."

"But you," said Miriam. "I mustn't interfere with your arrangements?"

"But you haven't interfered," said Ireton. "That is to say, you have perfected them by allowing me to discover you. Only one thing now remains to be done."

"What is that?" said Miriam.

"Can't you guess?" he said.

And she guessed right.

XLV

THE OWL'S NEST

It was quite true. Coppal, with never-failing instinct, had been down near Ballycroneen the morning when the coast-guards and fishermen had sighted the doomed vessel, held in the grip of the rocks; and had remained an active and passive witness of all the subsequent attempts that had been made to save the lives of the unfortunate crew and passengers. He instantly recognised his old enemy in the dead girl, who had been washed in among the terrible rocks; but he had sense enough to refrain from manifesting the exultation he felt at her awful fate. But he had followed the dismal procession to Glendaragh, and had noted where the bodies were placed; and when darkness had fallen, he made his way stealthily into the deserted mansion, crept upstairs, and found himself alone with the dead. Here the dark savagery of his stunted nature broke forth in incoherent ramblings about the girl, who in the pride and glory of her physical beauty, had mocked him and his many physical imperfections; and exulted over the terrible contrast between herself in the flush of young maidenhood and the twisted, misshapen body, and stunted intellect of the village fool. How he mouthed and mowed and exulted over the helpless form we can but feebly conjecture. That terrible howl that had first startled the watchers was the climax of all his savagery.

It was in smiting the dead body with his open palm in hatred and derision, that he struck against some hard substance in the breast pocket of her dress. He instantly tore the latter open and extracted some papers; and though ignorant of what they were, and utterly uncon-

scious of their value, he had sufficient glimmerings of reason to know, that they gave him some power over her or others. It was quite true, therefore, that Coppal had rifled the dead body, and whilst Declan and Anstie's father were making the dismal discovery of her identity, Coppal was climbing, with the agility of an ape, the thick ivy that mantled the walls of the old ruined Abbey, and depositing his treasure in the twigs and leaves of an owl's nest, which he had often noticed.

Meanwhile, a fresh thought had just dawned on the dazed senses of old James Carroll, as he watched, half stupefied by the dead body of his child. It was the shame that would be reflected on the dead girl and on the family by this so awful a retribution. All her wilfulness, her coquetry, her temper, her vanity, were well remembered in the village; and the old man thought with bitterness of how few there were who would shed a tear over the poor girl, or utter aught but a belief that her sudden and terrible death was the just retribution of her folly.

He was turning over in his dazed, stupid mind, half paralysed with grief, and again with anger, what could be done to conceal Anstie's sad return from the neighbours, and at the same time secure her Christian burial when the sudden paroxysm of insanity on the part of Declan, claimed his attention. He began foolishly to reason:—

"Don't be talkin' *raimeis*," he said, half angrily, although he was really afraid, "don't you see she's dead an' drowned?"

Declan had gone around, and taking the dead face between his hands, he began to hush it to sleep, as a mother would hush the cries of her infant.

"Cusheen-loo! Cusheen-loo! there now! there now, alanna! sleep, sleep! Whisht," he cried warningly to old Carroll, "whisht! Don't waken her! Don't waken her!"

He stood up and putting his finger on his lips, he watched for a long time the face of the dead girl. Then, beckoning in a shy way to the father, he cried:—

"You take her feet, an' I'll take her head, an' we'll go where she can sleep for ever. Aisy, aisy, don't waken her! don't waken her!"

The old man, with some dim notion that this movement on the part of the insane boy, would furnish a way out of his own difficulty, reverently gathered the wet skirts of the dead girl around her feet, and they bore the body out from the moonlight into the darkness of the staircase, and down to the hall, the mad boy murmuring all the way: —

"'Sh! 'Sh! Aisy, aisy! Cusheen-loo! Cusheen-loo!"

They took it gently out through the hall-door, and bore it down the avenue, until they emerged beyond the thin fringe of oak-trees that half filled the valley. Here they rested, for the burden of the dead girl was great.

"Where are you carryin' her, boy?" now demanded James Carroll. "Or what are you up to at all? Do you know what you're doin', or where you're goin'?"

"Whisht! whisht! I tell you," said Declan. "You'll wake her, an' she won't be obliged to you, I tell you. Do what I tell you. Come!"

The two men stooped and lifted the dead weight again, and moved down towards the village, now sleeping in absolute silence in the broad moonlight. But, before they reached the first house, Declan turned sharply to the right, and the old man saw that he was moving towards the Abbey, around which, and in which, slumbered generation after generation of the village dead. To reach the Abbey, however, they had to cross some fields, and the ditches that divided them; and it was a sore trouble to lay the poor, dead girl against the grassy hedge, and to lift her then, gently and ever so reverently, over it.

At last, thoroughly worn out and fatigued, they crossed from the moonlight into the deep darkness of the old Abbey walls, and there on a limestone slab, that covered some ancient vault, and was itself in turn, nearly covered with lichen, they laid their helpless burden.

"What in the name of God do you mane, Deck?" now

said the old man anxiously, although the hope rose strong within him that they two could bury the returned girl, and hush up the whole story of her sad death. "Do you mane to berry her without coffin, or prayer or priest, like a haythen?"

"Whisht! Whisht!" said Declan, anxiously peering around. "You'll wake her, and she wants a sleep, poor girl, after her long journey. Where's that her mother rests?"

"Over there in the angle," said the old man, pointing to a corner, hidden deep beneath the shadow of the ivied walls.

Declan went over on tiptoe, lest he should awake the dead girl; and taking an old mattock that lay against the wall, he began to dig fiercely. He did not see a grinning face hanging out from the ivy right over his head, and he did not understand the meaning of the "two-whit-two!" "two-whit-two!" "two-whit-two!" "Two!" — the mimic cry of the owl, whose nest lay hidden there.

Whilst the digging went on, Declan panting and sweating under the fierce exertion, the old man sat on a stone near his dead child. He was in an agony of doubt, whether it would not be better, then and there, to agree to what Declan was doing, and so obliterate every trace of the calamity that had fallen so suddenly and terribly upon him; or to stop this secret interment, and have his daughter buried next day with all the rites of the Church. But this would mean the coroner's inquest, the inevitable exposure, the triumph of Anstie's enemies, the grief of her few friends. Yes! this mad proceeding of Declan's was almost providential. He would not stop it, although his heart was breaking at the thought of his child being buried, shroudless and coffinless, like the unnamed and unrecognised dead.

At length, Declan had finished the digging of the grave; and now, coming over, and wiping with his bare, rough hand the sweat from his forehead, he said: —

"Stop there and watch her, till she wakes! But don't

spake to her at all, at all. I'll come back, and spake to her, an' she'll wake up and know me!"

He went away, and left the old man sitting by the dead. If James Carroll had been less stupid and dazed from want of sleep, and drink, and sorrow, he would have seen a white face peering down from the ivy overhead; he would have heard sounds of mocking laughter, as of triumph, and the chuckle of a grim delight, as of one who had conquered and was unrelenting in his victory. A few times the temptation to descend, and again insult his old enemy was almost too much for the fool; but he guessed that Declan might return at any moment, and he feared him. So he remained hidden, and satisfied his mindless rage by mouthing and spitting towards his hated, but now powerless enemy.

After a long interval, Declan returned bearing on his shoulders four long planks. These he placed in the grave in the shape of a coffin, reserving one for a cover. Then, coming over, he whispered to the old man:

"Aisy now, aisy, an' don't wake her! We'll make her nice and comfortable in her bed; an' she can sleep, an' sleep for ever! She wants it, poor girl, after her long journey!"

The old man consented with many a secret misgiving: but he feared to contradict the mad boy; and then — all would be well over, and no one should know that Anstie had ever come back. She would rest with her mother, and all would be well. So they raised the dead form again, gently brought it over and laid it between the rude planks in the grave, gently and reverently covered it after bedewing it with kisses and tears. And then Declan covered in the grave with the soft, brown earth, and placed the rude, green sods above it. The two men knelt side by side in the darkness, and said their *Paters* and *Aves* fervently for the beloved departed, and then rose to depart.

As they did, a sound of mocking laughter echoed from the wall above their heads. Declan turned, and cried: —

"What's that?"

"The hooting of the old owl, whose nest is above!" said the old man. "Come, Declan, let us get home. Your father will be waiting!"

The boy stood still.

"I'll wait till Anstie awakes," he said, "and take her home wid me."

"No, no," said James Carroll. "Come now, like a good boy. This is no place for you at this hour of night. What will your father say?"

"Go an' tell him," replied Declan, "that I am here watchin' till Anstie wakes, an' I'll take her home."

"Anstie is dead and berried," said the old man. "Didn't you berry her yerself?"

"She's not dead," said Declan, his fury rising at being contradicted. "I say she's not dead. She's asleep there in her bed; an' I'll wait till she awakens."

"May God help you, an' me, an' all of us," said the old man, turning away. "'Tis a sorrowful story I have to tell you, Dave Ahern, this night."

For a long time the demented boy sat there in the darkness, his poor wrecked brain trying to piece together all the events of the night. But it failed to catch them and collect them; and they fell, like drops of water from a broken wheel, and refused to coalesce or unite. One thing alone seemed certain — that Anstie was dead tired and sleepy after her long voyage homeward. But she would awaken and arise and go home with him, when the moonlight faded and the morning dawned.

At intervals, the owl's melancholy notes were carefully mimicked overhead; but no other sound broke the stillness.

At length, the dawn broke, and simultaneously the thought of the robbed and rifled girl broke on his mind. Suddenly, as in such cases, a fierce gust of fury shook him; and he strode forward, as if going to the village. He had gone about the breadth of one field, when the paroxysm ceased, and he returned to the Abbey by another path. He had just entered through a broken and

falling arch, when he discerned in the faint light someone at Anstie's grave. He stopped for a moment. Then he saw that the figure was tearing with hands and feet, as a dog will tear the earth with fore and hind legs. He then approached. Coppal heard the heavy tread, and sprang up to fly. But in an instant, Declan's hands were upon him, and he smote the idiot fearfully. But Coppal had all the agility and strength of a wild animal; and, unable to strike back he grappled with Declan, and twisting his long, supple legs inside the other's, he pulled him to the ground, and there the madman and the idiot writhed and scratched, and tore and struggled, until at last, the strength of the idiot gave way, and his hold relaxed, and he lay helpless and panting and half-dead at the feet of his adversary. They glared at each other for a time in silence; and then a light seemed to flash on the mad boy's brain.

"Lemme go home," spluttered the idiot. "I never did nothin' to you, Deck Ahern. Lemme go home!"

"Whisht, or I'll kill you," said Declan. "Do you want to wake her? An' she asleep after her long journey. But you robbed her above in the ould house of Glendaragh. Her father an' me saw it. Give up what you sthole, or I'll murder you there on her bed!"

The idiot whimpered and cried and protested. It was in vain. But it was only when Declan approached to lay violent hands on him again, that he pointed up to the owl's nest, and said: —

"'Tis there!"

"What's there? Go and get it, you — fool, an' be quick about it!"

Coppal rose, and planting his bare feet in the thick tendrils of the ivy, he climbed rapidly upwards to the nest. Once or twice he paused, and looked down to ascertain if Declan was still waiting; but when he found there was no escape, he drew out the packet, and descended.

"Is this all?" said Declan suspiciously.

"All!" said the idiot.

"There's something else?" queried Declan. "Come, quick, or I'll smash your empty skull!"

"Dere's nothin'," whimpered the fool, "but tree duck eggs, an' a piece of twine, an' a chaney! Oh, for God's sake, Deck, an' your mudder's sowl, don't take me piece of chaney!"

Declan put the packet in his pocket; and then, catching a fierce hold of the fool, he dragged him over to Anstie's grave.

"Kneel down, you omadhaun!" he cried.

Coppal knelt in fear.

"Now, listen, if you value your life. Anstie Carroll is there asleep, dead asleep, poor girl, because she's come from a long journey. No wan is to wake her, but me. She knows me, an' no wan else; an' she won't wake, till I call her. She's tired, poor girl, an' no wondher, afther her long journey. Ef you so much as walk over her bed there in the grass; ef you touch a nettle or a dock lafe; ef I ketch you agen within a field of the Abbey, I'll tear you, limb from limb, and throw yer carcase into the say."

Coppal believed him, for he slunk silently away. And Declan, kneeling down, and uttering his lullaby over the grave, composed the earth and the turf that had been rudely torn by the savage hatred of the fool.

XLVI

NEMESIS

AMIDST a vast pile of correspondence on Holthsworth's table one morning, a postcard with one single word written thereon easily escaped his notice. There were letters from junior officials, asking his influence to secure for them places in the railway and other departments, over which he had apparently unlimited control; letters from fellow-directors, suggesting many possible improvements, which he calmly tore up and flung into the waste-paper basket, letters from secretaries, with reports about mismanagement, which he carefully pigeon-holed; letters from stock-brokers, suggesting some fresh speculations, which he studied, balancing probabilities and uncertainties, and finally laid aside for future consideration; letters from religious and charitable organizations, pleading for support; letters of invitation to dinners, to at-homes, charitable concerts; letters, faintly perfumed, which he locked into his escritoire, with a little pleasure and some annoyance. He then opened half-penny post circulars, which he tore up without even looking at them, wondering how it could ever repay manufacturers and others to print and issue such nonsense. He then looked leisurely at postcard after postcard, written and printed, and lazily tossed them aside. He came at last to the one on which was written the single word: *Arrived*. He gazed at it incuriously for a while, until it feebly dawned on his consciousness that this was his own handwriting. He then saw the Glendarragh postmark, and instantly recognising what it meant, he brushed aside the entire heap of correspondence and fixed his attention upon this. It meant to his mind but one thing.

"Ha!" he said. "The storm and stress of life have brought her back! Nothing like the want of pence to bring truants to their senses. I wonder what her experiences were! Bar or theatre, I suppose! And now! Let me see! Of course she is domiciled with that old fool of a parson and his shrewish wife. But — my dear Lady Disdain will not remain a burden with them for long, or I misunderstand her character. And what remains — except the paternal arms of her much-despised and much-injured guardian, who, however, in that spirit of Christian magnanimity which characterises him, is prepared to shelter the weary and wilful dove? These vile hinds dare not offer their war-chest, as they call it, even though they knew the property was hers. Yes! The game is playing steadily into thy hands, O Augustus! One move more, and I capture the Queen!"

He remained some time buried in deep thought, debating whether he should run down at once, or await developments. There was a good deal to be said in favour of the latter alternative, for would it not be wise to wait until the fair quarry had completely exhausted herself, and should, by very force of circumstances, rush towards him? But, after a long and weary debate with himself, he fell back on his favourite maxim: *Doubt is only resolved by action*; and he decided to go down to Glendarragh next day.

The good parson and his wife were again surprised and somewhat annoyed when they received the telegram announcing his arrival.

"That odious man again!" she exclaimed. "What brings him here now? One would think that his last reception had cooled his ardour for ever!"

"He's a man of energy, my dear," said her husband. "I'm afraid he'll harass these poor people!"

"I don't think you need fear that, John Crosthwaite," said his wife. "They are more likely to harass him!"

"But if he takes out writs, and all that kind of thing," said the parson.

"But he won't," persisted his wife. "He knows right well — better than anyone else — that the property is tied up, and that he cannot touch an inch of it."

"True! But, then, if he is Miriam's guardian and trustee, cannot he put the law in force? I only ask for information, my dear. I know nothing about such things."

"Better leave them alone, John," she said. "The question now is, how shall we entertain the man. I suppose we cannot turn him out?"

"Oh, no! no!" said the rector, in alarm. "We couldn't think of that, my dear!"

"And yet, one might reasonably ask, why he should so presume upon our hospitality? We know nothing of the man!"

"Well, for dear Miriam's sake, my dear," pleaded the parson, who was really beginning to fear that his wife would send Holthsworth away dinnerless.

"Oh! yes, that's all right, John Crosthwaite," she said. "We can't turn him off. But, my, my, how am I to manage at such short notice? One would suppose we had a butcher's shop next door."

"There's no fear about *your* management, my dear," said her husband, dropping in some very genuine oil of flattery on the nerves of his excited spouse. "I'm sure the last time he was here Mr. Holthsworth was most complimentary about our little management."

"H'm!" said his sceptical wife. "Mr. Holthsworth is too polite, or — well, something else shall I say? However, we shall do our best. I only hope his stay with us shall be as brief as we wish."

However, Holthsworth came along just at the time indicated in his telegram, for he was a man of punctuality and order. He also overwhelmed his hosts with profuse apologies for his intrusion, and especially for such an abrupt intrusion. He begged and implored Mrs. Crosthwaite

to put herself to no trouble whatever for his convenience, or to the minimum, when she protested ambiguously, and John Crosthwaite assured him it was a pleasure beyond repayment. He settled down amid the rural surroundings, fitting in and adapting himself to them, without the least sacrifice of personal convenience. But he was studiously reticent during the hour that intervened before dinner-time, and during the dinner-hour, about the object of his visit to Glendarragh. But he looked somewhat surprised when only the parson, the parson's wife and himself sat down to dinner; and every time the door opened, he seemed to start and stare, as if he expected someone else other than the little servant-maid. At length, he seemed to grow *distract* and reserved, and a silence settled down on the place, broken only by a few polite invitations and requests.

When he was alone with the good parson, he could no longer restrain his curiosity.

He said, abruptly, and yet with a studied carelessness, as he balanced his spoon above his cup: —

“So Miriam has arrived at last?”

“Oh, has she?” said the delighted parson. “What news? I must go at once and tell Annie!”

He had risen to go out; but Holthsworth, annoyed, bade him, with an angry gesture, to sit down.

“I only asked the question,” he said, sharply. “I asked if Miriam had come.”

“Oh!” said the disappointed parson. “I’m sure I beg your pardon. I understood you to say that our dear girl had come back to Ireland.”

“Well, I conclude she has,” said Holthsworth, “but I thought, if she had come back, I should certainly find her here.”

“Alas! no,” said the old man, relapsing into a kind of sorrowful resignation.

“Well,” said Holthsworth, after a pause, “one thing is quite certain, that Miss Lucas has returned. And I took it as a matter of course that, when she did not come

to my residence in Dublin, it was because she had older, and perhaps dearer friends here."

"Perhaps," said the old man, "Annie could throw some light on the matter. But I have heard nothing. A poor little girl named Carroll, who had been formerly Miriam's servant, did return, alas! under unhappy circumstances. She was picked up drowned from a steamer that ran ashore on the rocks down along the coast —"

"Ha!" said Holthsworth, "that explains the matter."

He now remembered his instructions to Deck Ahern; and was inwardly cursing his own stupidity.

"But you were saying? —"

"Oh, nothing more but that the poor girl, I believe, had some papers about Glendarragh — at least so it is whispered in the village, which have come in some way into the hands of Deck Ahern."

"That's the boy that has the boat in the village?" asked Holthsworth.

"Yes," said the old man, unsuspectingly, "but you see they don't want these things to be known. They buried the poor girl secretly, and there was some trouble with the Coroner about the matter; and they don't want the matter to be spoken of."

"Of course! of course!" said Holthsworth. "With your permission I think I'll have a cigar, and a little stroll. I shall be back for tea."

And he lit his cigar and walked away slowly; but, when he had gone out of sight of the rectory, he quickened his pace, and passing rapidly down the road that led to the sea, he skirted the sea-wall, and in a few minutes was in the village.

The days had lengthened out now, for it was late in the springtide, and the evening sun was setting. But it was twilight in the little hamlet; and deep dusk in Dave Ahern's cottage when the half-door was darkened by Holthsworth's figure, and the strange voice hailed the two old men, who sat dozing near the fire: —

"Hallo! anyone inside?"

Old Dave Ahern rose up feebly, and came to the door.

"Are you Ahern?" said the stranger.

"I am," said Dave, wonderingly.

"Where's Deck, your son?" said the voice.

"I suppose somewhere among the neighbours," was the old man's reply. "Can I do anything for yer 'anner?"

"Well, yes and no!" said Holthsworth, dubiously. "The fact is, I came to get some papers he has belonging to Miss Lucas. Miss Lucas, you know, is my ward; that is, I am her guardian; and I am empowered to get and retain these papers, according to law. Have you got them?"

"I suppose they're somewhere in the house," said the old man hesitatingly. "Do you know, James, where Deck keeps 'em—the papers you know, that Coppal stole from Anstie?"

"N-no!" said James Carroll. "I can't say as I do. An' I think it 'ud be besht for all consarned not to tetch 'em, in Deck's absence."

"But, my dear man," said Holthsworth, insinuatingly, "they're mine, you know. In fact, it was Deck wrote to me to come down from Dublin, with the view of handing me those papers. See, here is his postcard!"

"Oh! begor, yer 'anner," said Dave Ahern, "we didn't know there was any undhersthanding between ye. Deck kept it very quiet. I suppose we'd better settle the matther, James. Gi' me a candle."

He took and lighted the candle, went into an inner room, made a search, and came forth, holding the yellow and water-stained parchments in his hands.

"Here they are, yer 'anner!" said Dave Ahern. "But we'd be behoulden to you, ef you'd see Deck himself, and explain matthers to him."

"All right! never fear!" said Holthsworth, holding the papers up in the growing twilight and examining them. "Deck and I understand each other. I'll see him, and make all right. Good evening!"

“Good-night, and good-luck!” said both the old men in one breath.

Elated at his easy success, Holthsworth passed rapidly along the village street, lightly leaped over a fence, and mounted swiftly the grassy slope that led to the high cliffs beyond. He was eager to snatch every moment from the growing darkness to read the contents of these momentous papers, which, he felt, would put him in possession of all the information he needed, and probably show him a means of asserting his own rights over the estate of Glendarragh. He sat down on a ledge or rock overhanging the sea. He did not notice a long, deep fissure in the turf behind him, a split of about a hand’s width, which denoted that the cliff was loosened here by the fierce hammering of the seas beneath. It was a calm, lovely evening, the sea dark-purple, the sky glittering; no sound but the soft plash of the waters beneath.

There were two packages given to Holthsworth by the fishermen. The one was parchment, very thick, and old, and discoloured. By the large letters endorsed on the back, it clearly contained the title-deeds to the House and Manor of Glendarragh. He opened its heavy folds, and saw the enormous seal at the head of the document. He was satisfied, and he folded up the parchment again.

The second document was a will, bequeathing the Estate and Manor of Glendarragh to Miriam H. Lucas; and, looking rapidly at the signature, Holthsworth discerned in the waning light the name: Jane Holthsworth Lucas. He glanced down the page, and saw, to his surprise, that it was dated but a few weeks back, and had been written in Blackwell Penitentiary.

“Poor Jennie!” said Holthsworth, replacing his cigar, and re-lighting it, as he folded the paper. “Clearly this uncanny but delightful place is yours; and might have been mine, had I been more discreet. Alas! discretion comes only from experience. But ‘Blackwell Penitentiary!’ what drove Jennie thither, I wonder, and in what

capacity? Criminal? I shouldn't wonder. There was a devil there. But, perhaps, she married the Governor, or something of the kind. No matter. The title-deeds of Glendarragh are now in my possession. I snap my fingers at fate!"

A very gentle, soft hand was laid on his shoulder. He started up and saw Deck Ahern, but he didn't notice the gleam of madness in the boy's eyes.

"Hush!" said Deck, in a whisper, holding up a warning finger. "Hush! Don't spake or you'll wake her. She sint me for thim papers they giv you!"

"That's all right, Deck," said Holthsworth, airily, thinking that the boy had been drinking, and inclined to humour him. "Here are the papers all right."

And he showed him the parchments. Deck put out his hand to seize them; but Holthsworth promptly put his hand that held the papers behind his back. Instantly, Deck's strong fingers grasped his coat. He felt the hard, iron knuckles grinding into his breast.

"She said," continued the boy, still speaking in a whisper and avoiding the name of "Anstie" as much as possible, "that I was to bring her back thim letters, and put 'em in her coffin, until she wakes up from her long sleep. Give 'em to me!"

"Nonsense, boy!" said Holthsworth, "the papers are mine; and no one else shall get them. Let me go at once!"

Instead of heeding that peremptory command, the boy screwed his fingers tighter in Holthsworth's coat, and bringing his face close, he whispered, as his hot breath fanned Holthsworth's face: —

"You won't giv 'em to me. Thin, she said I was to kill you — to kill you here."

Holthsworth, though a strong man and a brave man, was now thoroughly frightened. He saw he had to deal with a madman. They were alone on the cliff at a spot where they could not be seen from the village; and Holthsworth's pride would not allow him to shout for help,

even if help were available. And the night had come down, dark and starless.

He again attempted to wheedle the boy into good-humour and compliance.

"Come now, Deck," he said, feebly trying to loose the boy's grip on his coat, "you are Miss Miriam's friend; and these papers are hers. Come along down to the village, and I'll read them for you. And you'll see what they mean."

The vacant eyes of the boy seemed to look not at him but beyond him to the vast sea-reaches that lay behind them; and the strong clutch now became convulsive.

"She tould me," he whispered, "that I was to get them letthers; an' she tould me that I was to kill you, becos why, you are the owner of Glendarragh, and the Curse has come down on you."

"Stop this — nonsense at once, you Sir!" shouted Holthsworth, rendered desperate by the danger of the situation, "and unhand me, or I'll put you at once into the hands of the police."

He made a violent effort to free himself, but the mad boy clung desperately to him, forcing him back, inch by inch, to the verge of the cliff. Again and again Holthsworth threw his strength backward against him; and now, thoroughly alarmed, he flung the parchments far in upon the grass; and clutched the boy by the neck. There was a terrific struggle for a few moments. Then, as a pang of horror shot through his heart, he felt the loosened earth gliding beneath him. He was instantly unnerved, and as his clutch on the boy's throat weakened and loosened, the latter threw all his strength forward, the broken segment of the cliff gave way beneath the fierce trampling; and with a cry of horror and despair, the two men rolled down the steep decline, until they fell against the sharp, red rocks, where the broken waters were surging and heaving beneath.

XLVII

THE UPLIFTING OF THE CURSE

NOT until the following morning was the full horror of the tragedy understood by the villagers. The good hostess at the rectory was at first impatient, then annoyed, then indignant, at the unpunctuality of their guest.

"I suppose these are city manners," she said to her husband. "Great people, in order to show their greatness, cannot descend to minor details of punctuality. They like to show how much they are above such trifles; and to get humbler people to wait upon their leisure. Very good, Mr. H., but perhaps we may not be so condescending again."

"You don't know, my dear," said her gentle husband, "Mr. Holthsworth might have been detained on business."

"Business?" echoed his wife. "What business could he have here, I'd like to know? He got enough of business the last time he was down here, I think."

"But, my dear," said her husband, trembling while he made the terrible confession, "perhaps I should have mentioned it sooner —"

He paused for a moment.

"I think I mentioned casually — by mere accident — to Mr. Holthsworth — that that little village girl, Carroll, wasn't it? came back — that is, was picked up dead from a steamer — and —"

The good wife looked so serious at this that the rector's nerve failed him.

"And — what else?" she queried.

"Well, my dear, I told him — I suppose it was highly imprudent, but you know I don't understand these bus-

iness matters — that there were some papers belonging to our dear Miriam found on the girl, and that they were now in possession of that poor mad boy — Ahern!”

The good wife only shook her head sadly at her spouse. It meant a good deal, and he grew correspondingly more alarmed. But she only said: —

“That explains the delay. He’s gone down to Ahern’s to see, and to get hold of, those papers. And then — poor Miriam!”

The good vicar was so alarmed at these words that he could only stare at his wife in affright. At last he found words to say: —

“I’m genuinely sorry — indeed I am. There is my predominant weakness always — sins of the tongue. I assure you, my dear, I make ever so many resolutions against the vice; but then I am immediately betrayed again. I’m afraid now I have done great mischief; and above all to dear Miriam. But, perhaps, my dear, it may be all right yet. Perhaps Mr. Holthsworth doesn’t care for these papers at all; or perhaps young Ahern won’t give them up?”

“There’s just one chance for that,” said his wife, “namely, that Ahern is mad. If he were sane, nothing could help his being wheedled out of these papers by such a man as Holthsworth. But John —”

“Yes, my dear,” said John. This was the preliminary always of a lecture, which the good man took meekly.

“There’s something in what you say about sins of the tongue. Now, I’ll tell you what you’ll do, when Mr. Holthsworth returns. Read up a little something about grace and predestination. He’s strong on those points; and, if he tries to get you away from these, and to talk on local matters, I’ll cough, or call Maggie, and you’ll understand.”

“That’s an admirable idea,” said the vicar, enthusiastically. “Or, lest I should forget even that, and you know how my memory sometimes wanders, suppose I should tie a piece of string, just a tiny piece, so that

it would not be observable, to my wrist, and pass it along the table—”

But the good wife shook her head at this. It would never do. Besides, John Crosthwaite had forgotten that he would not be sitting at the dinner-table, and that to trail a string along the room might be awkward.

“Or I’ll tell you, my dear,” he cried, seeing that that plan would not work, “suppose you watch me, and just when I am going to betray myself, as I am sure to do, suppose you say with some emphasis: ‘Another cup of tea, John?’ How would that work?”

“That would be better,” said his wife, who had sunk into a brown study, wondering, wondering what was detaining Holthsworth. “I must order the candles whatever; and get the lamps lighted. What can be keeping the man?”

But the hours rolled by, and there was no tidings. And the thick darkness of the spring evening had deepened into darker night; and no footsteps sounded on the gravel before the rectory door.

“This is very strange,” thought Mrs. Crosthwaite, “very strange, indeed. Making all allowance for the time it would take to go down to the village, and return, even if Deck Ahern were refractory, Mr. Holthsworth should be here now. I hope nothing has happened!”

She ordered tea for herself and her husband; and they took the meal in silence. Once, the vicar said:—

“Strange, my dear, that Mr. Holthsworth came down here for the purpose of meeting Miriam!”

“How?” said his wife. “Meeting Miriam? What put that idea into your head?”

“Why he told me so,” said the vicar. “Perhaps, you noticed, my dear, that he was restless during dinner. I didn’t. I only conclude so. You are so much sharper.”

“Well?” said his wife

“Then when you left, he said at once: ‘So Miriam has come home at last?’ He was disappointed when I told him the dear girl had not come here; and it was then I told him about Anstie Carroll and the papers.”

Mrs. Crosthwaite sank into a brown study. Things appeared to be converging strangely from all directions towards some final issue, as yet undefined. Holthsworth was not a man to come down from Dublin, and leave all his work behind him, without cause. What if Ireton had found Miriam at last, and was returning; or that Miriam herself, tired of wandering amongst strangers, was about to seek home? It gave the good lady food for thought all the evening. When at last, the time for retiring had come, she knew that neither herself nor her husband could bear the strain of so grave an uncertainty during the night. She sent one of the girls down to the village to inquire if Mr. Holthsworth had been there. The messenger brought back the vague information that Mr. Holthsworth had been at Dave Ahern's cottage, had taken away some papers, and had left for the rectory. That was all.

A vague feeling of dread, that something was wrong, now crept down on the fancy of Mrs. Crosthwaite. Her good husband, less liable to neurotic changes, calmly read on during these momentous hours. At last, his wife ordered the servants to bed, but kept all lamps lighting. She and her husband would remain up to watch and wait, lest at any moment, their guest should return. Very late at night, as the hall-clock struck the hour of midnight, the anxious woman decided that something was seriously wrong. She bade her husband go to bed; and flung herself on a sofa to await whatever was to happen. Gradually, she sank into a light sleep; and whether her imagination had been busy with the legend of Glendaragh, and the strange glyptic symbols in the dining-room of the ruined house or not, she had a dream, in which she distinctly saw the figure of a man walking in a puzzled and frightened manner along the great road that was lined with the mysterious statues; and she knew that the man was Holthsworth; and she watched him with some interest, but without sympathy, as he groped his way, like a blind man towards his fate. And strange to

say, although dreams are as a rule grotesque in their details, she thought she beheld the man's life symbolised in that wandering and unconscious trance in which he seemed to be pursuing his way; and in the dread symbolism of those weird figures, turning aside as he passed them, and vanishing in smoke. "There," she caught herself saying, "is his vanity, his pride, his hypocrisy, his wealth, and there!" — For a moment her heart stood still, as Holthsworth seemed to approach the dread figure at the end; and she woke up with a shudder.

It was the chill finger of the dawn, that really woke her up to life; for the grey light was creeping through the windows, and although the lamps were still lighting, and shedding a little heat on the atmosphere, the cold air had crept in through the window and touched the sleeping woman. She had hardly realised, however, where she was, and recalled, with some difficulty the events of the preceding evening, when she heard the tramp of men, and their voices. She kept still and listened. No one was yet stirring in the house. The voices came nearer, hushed and muffled, as if in reverence. Then, the garden gate opened; and she heard the tramp of men on the gravel walk before the door. She was not surprised, when on opening the front door in answer to their knock, she saw at her feet, resting on a rude door, that had been plucked from its hinges, the shattered and mutilated body of her guest.

"We found him, mum," said one of the fishermen, "at five this morning at the foot of the big cliff. We wint out airly to see if we could find Deck Ahern, who was missing all night; and sure, there were the two together, this gintleman and Deck."

"Is Ahern also dead?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite, who had turned her eyes away from the face of the dead man.

"No!" was the answer. "But he has a broken arm and leg. He was lying atop of the gintleman —"

"Yes! yes!" said Mrs. Crosthwaite impatiently, dreading to hear that it was a murder.

"An' the gintleman was flung across a sharp rock —"

"An' his neck was bruck," chimed in another.

"But — but, how did it happen? What happened?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite.

"God alone knows that!" was the reply. "What we think is, that Deck followed the gintleman up the cliff to get back the letthers which the ould man gave him an' whilst they were talkin' and argin', the cliff gev way onderneath them. Here's the letthers, Ma'am. Maybe, you'd keep them now!"

She took the yellow parchments from the strong, grimy hand of the fisherman, and bade the men bring in the broken and mutilated body of Holthsworth. They laid it on the floor of the dining-room, and waited, twisting their caps between their fingers. The house was now astir; but the good vicar was still sleeping, in happy unconsciousness of the terrible tragedy. His wife gave the men some drink, which they took in sips, philosophising between each sip as to the causes, and the ultimate issues of the event.

"As soon as you are ready, men," said Mrs. Crosthwaite, "let some of you run over to the nearest police station, and summon the sergeant and a constable. There must be an inquest, of course."

"Of course, mum," was the reply. "But the divil a much information (I beg yer pardon, mum, for the expression) they are likely to get beyant what we have."

"Is Ahern quite insensible?" she asked.

"No more senses than a baby," replied the man. "He is mumbling an' mouthin' a lot of nonsense to himself about Anstie an' the Curse. But, whether they were argin', or scoldin', no wan can say. Only wan thing is certain — the cliff gave way onderneath their feet. Sure 'twas always a dangerous spot. Didn't I aften tell you, Thade, that somebody 'ud be killed there?"

"Begor you did. It didn't need spectacles to see that."

The men appeared to be hesitating about something; and the vicar's wife noticed it.

"Well, there's no use in wasting time now," she said, "all will come out at the inquest. But let some of you also get out the undertaker and a couple of men. We had better make all arrangements at once."

There was still an inclination to linger; and yet some reluctance to explain. At last, the oldest fisherman, who had assumed the office of spokesman, said:—

"I'm thinkin', Ma'am, that we might as well tell the crowner that he'll have two inquests instid of one."

"How?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite. "Is Ahern likely to die?"

"No, mum," said the man. "But —"

He stopped, and studied his cap.

"Out wid it, Thade!" said one of his comrades. "Sure *we* can't help it!"

And Thade said, fearfully:—

"We're afraid, Ma'am, there'll be two corpses; or rather, a corp and a skeleton. Bekos, there's a skeleton jammed under the rock where the gintleman fell; and we're afraid 'tis ould Mr. Lucas!"

Then the horror of the thing smote the imagination of the strong woman; and she had to hold by a chair to prevent herself from falling.

"Go now!" she said. "And when the police arrive they can make another search with you!"

They did; and just as the man declared, they discovered the skeleton of the old man. He had fallen helplessly over the cliff the evening of the dreadful storm; rolled downwards, and probably held back by the violence of the hurricane, instead of being precipitated on the rocks, he had rolled helplessly into a deep fissure made between the face of the cliff and an inslanting boulder. Thence, there was no chance of rescue, except by the merciful hands of Death.

In a few days quiet had settled down on the remote seaside village again; and everything had resumed its bald appearance, like a theatre seen by daylight. John

Crosthwaite had returned from Dublin, whither he had accompanied Holthsworth's remains. The good man had set out on the journey with as much fear and trembling as if he had been going to Nova Zembla; and he had returned with as much delight as if he had escaped unspeakable terrors. Nothing but a sheer sense of duty could have induced him to embark on such a dangerous enterprise, and many were the admonitions and advices given by his good wife to one who, she said, was no more qualified to take care of himself than a baby.

And the good man, notwithstanding, did plunge into pitfalls enough, through a strange belief, from which he could never wholly emancipate himself, that most human beings were like himself. He brought down on his head the wrath of a young mother, who resented his interference when she held her baby half way out of a carriage window, when the train was speeding at forty miles an hour. And, untaught by this adventure, he volunteered some information to a fashionably-dressed young lady, who sat opposite to him in the narrow carriage; but unfortunately he ended the information by saying: "My dear!" and got a look in return that withered him up for the rest of the journey. Yet, that was one of the weaknesses against which his wife had specially warned him. When he arrived at Kingsbridge, after arranging about the transfer of the remains to Mrs. Holthsworth's house, he was surprised to find that every cab was engaged. He wandered down along the whole length of the platform, holding his humble valise in his hand, and challenging the lordly drivers above his head. In vain! Cabby after cabby refused to acknowledge his existence; and the few who saw him were "Engaged." At last, he mounted a ramshackle side-car, drawn by a skeleton horse, and nearly frightened the driver out of his wits by asking to be driven to the most fashionable hotel in the city. This was done by his wife's advice, who held fast by the ancient fallacy that the dearest hotel is also the cheapest. But he had to pay. He was charged an Archiepiscopal fare.

He nearly fainted under the supercilious scorn of the lady-clerk, who relegated him to the fifth or sixth story of the hotel. A young waiter came forward to show him the way to the elevator; but desisted when he saw the threadbare appearance of the old man, who now had to mount the five flights of stairs and carry his own valise. But, presto! On the fifth or sixth landing, this poor blundering humanity of ours, showed him a little of its very hidden treasures in the shape of a little servant-girl who came forward, relieved him of his valise, asked in a delightfully querulous manner, what did they mean by allowing such a gentleman to mount those steps, when there was a lift, etc. —

“But what is a lift, my dear?” said John Crosthwaite. “You see I’m from the country, and I haven’t been from home for ever so long.”

“I’ll show you, Sir,” she said, as she hurried him along the carpeted corridor, and opening a door, switched on the electric light, placed the valise on a stand, hustled around, drew the blinds, and then said: —

“Now, one moment, Sir, and I shall get you some hot water. You must be very tired, Sir. Did you come far?”

“From the furthest corner of the County Cork,” said John Crosthwaite. “I came with the remains of a friend from the city here.”

“Oh, then you came for a funeral, Sir?” she queried, as her interest grew greater.

“Yes, my dear,” said the old man. “A sad accident, a sad accident!”

“Just one moment now, Sir, and I’ll fetch you some hot water.”

“Oh, no, no, my dear,” he said. “This is quite good enough,” as he poured out some water into the basin.

But the little maid was not to be denied. She skipped along the corridor; and in a minute, was back with clean towels, fresh soap, etc. She whisked the cold water into a bucket, poured out the steaming hot water, and:—

"Now, Sir, if you want me just touch that button there, and I'll come!"

"Where, my dear?" said the old man, looking around for a button in despair.

"Just here, Sir," she said. "Look!"

And she touched the button.

"What a wonderful thing science is," said the old man, admiringly. "Really wonderful. And you tell me now, my dear, that it is quite equivalent to ringing a bell?"

"Yes, Sir," she said, "and much handier. But have you ordered dinner?"

"N-no!" he said, hesitatingly. "I think I'll have a cup of tea later on."

"I'd advise you to dine, Sir," she said. "You have come a long journey. Allow me now, and I'll get Charles to keep a snug little corner in the dining-room for you. The *table d'hôte* is just on. You'd rather be alone, I'm sure!"

"Oh, yes, my dear," said the old man. "Some little corner away from the light. My sight is not good —"

"I understand, Sir," she said, smiling. "I'll make it all right with Charles. You just stop here now until I call. You can read, or something; and I'll get Charles, when he's ready, to come and take you down the lift!"

"You're awfully good, awfully good," said John Cros-thwaite. "I must write and tell Annie how kind you have been."

And at the appointed time, Charles, gorgeous in an enamelled shirt-front and spotless cuffs and tie, knocked at the door and said: —

"Dinner ready, Sir!"

The old man trembled at the apparition; but meekly followed his superb guide along the corridor, and into a little room which, to John's amazement, instantly began to descend, but with such a soft, easy motion that there was no alarm — only a recurrence of the classic words — *Facilis descensus*. And then they touched solid earth

again; and John, following his guide, soon found himself in a gorgeous chamber, a piece of poetry out of the Arabian Nights; and half-miserable, with sight and hearing nearly gone, he found himself at a little table in a corner, where spotless *naperie*, brilliant glass, and some fragrant flowers made him think: Life is worth living! Here he had a quiet dainty dinner, although he thought it interminable. Once or twice, he looked around shyly; but shaded his eyes at once, dazzled by the splendour of the crowd of ladies and gentlemen around him. And once, he heard a soft footfall beside his chair, and he heard his little maid whispering: —

“I hope you are quite comfortable, Sir? I have told Charles to take you to the reading-room after dinner, and get you a little corner to yourself. And, mind, you’re not to climb those stairs again. Charles will take you to the lift. You touch the bell in the reading-room when you wish to retire; and Charles will come at once.”

Evidently, Charles was the obedient slave of this young princess in disguise.

John Crosthwaite lay awake half the night, pondering on the goodness of humanity and the progress of science, and anxiously debating with himself whether he was to offer that little servant-maid and Charles ten shillings, or a pound.

He had scarcely tired of telling all his thrilling adventures to his good wife on his return to Glendarragh, and things had assumed their everyday aspect, when the great sensation came.

On a certain warm, sunny morning, Mrs. Crosthwaite was knitting after breakfast in her drawing-room. She was thinking of many things whilst she worked mechanically. And she had some unpleasant, worrying thoughts, the greatest of which however, was, that a certain visitor of the previous day had kindly told her that a certain kind of tulip or narcissus, which was now gaily flaunting its beauties in the narrow beds outside the window, had

come to be regarded as so vulgar that it was now relegated to the front of labourers' cottages in the district.

"Well, to be sure!" said Mrs. Crosthwaite to herself, as she angrily snipped a piece of woollen thread, "vulgar! vulgar! When people use that word, and often, I know what to think. As if anything could be vulgar which the good Lord has made!"

"And to think," she continued, "that I got out my best Sèvres just to compliment that woman. The kitchen cups would have been quite good enough for her! Here's another of those tiresome visitors, I suppose," she exclaimed, as a covered car drove up to the door of the rectory and stopped there. "People nowadays seem to have nothing to do but gad about and gossip."

She thought she heard an exclamation of surprise from her maid, as the latter opened the door; and then, as her eyes seemed to start from her head in delight, burst into the drawing-room with a:

"Miss Miriam, Ma'am!"

Yes! Indeed, it was Miriam — the long-lost, the much-desired, standing like a beautiful statue draped in black, as if she were not sure what reception she was to expect. The good rector's wife was about to pretend indifference, to assume anger, to feign displeasure — any of the little tricks with which genuine affection seeks sometimes to disguise itself; but the sight of that black dress and the sad crape that draped it, was too much; and she only drew down the dear girl's face to her own, and mingled her tears with Miriam's. Thus, the two women held each other in a long embrace, until at last the elder recovered herself, and summoned her husband from his study. Here much the same scene, but somewhat less exaggerated, took place; and then Miriam had sense enough left to inquire whether she might discharge the driver, and get in her luggage. Then the old spirit of playfulness shone like a rainbow amid the tears of the good wife, as she asked her husband: —

"Shall we let her in, John? Don't you think we would act rightly in tumbling out all the boxes of this truant, who never troubled herself about us these many years?"

To which her husband replied:—

"This time, my dear; but only this time! The next time Miriam goes away, we won't have her back."

Then commenced a series of questions about her adventures, her present position, her future prospects. Each admission — that she had found her mother under appalling circumstances; that she had found Ireton under happier circumstances, and had been married; that she had heard of Holthsworth's death, and knew no more — became the occasion of new demonstrations of affection on the part of her good host and hostess.

"And now," said Miriam, "I cannot be sure whether I have any remaining claim to Glendarragh, because the papers given me by my mother are, I suppose, hopelessly lost."

"What became of them?" asked Mrs. Crosthwaite, innocently.

"My dear!" said John Crosthwaite. "Don't you know — don't you remember?"

"John Crosthwaite," said his wife, "will I ever get you to hold your tongue?"

"Yes, my dear!" said John.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Miriam. "My poor mother gave them to the care of that little girl — you remember her — Anstie Carroll, with strict injunctions to seek me and find me. I understand that she sailed for home, believing to find me here. I have heard no more."

"Then you have heard absolutely nothing?" said the rector's wife.

"Nothing," said Miriam simply. "We, that is, Hugh and I, only landed at Queenstown this morning very early from the *Adriatic*, I came on here. Hugh remained for some hours in Queenstown."

"Then it is for your mother you are in mourning, Miriam?" said Mrs. Crosthwaite.

"Of course," said Miriam surprised.

And Mrs. Crosthwaite tapped the table in a meditative mood.

But gradually, they broke the whole truth and tragic solemnity of the fates that had befallen the many actors in this little drama; and Miriam saw, as in a sad and silent and dumb manner, just as things happen in sleep, the figures come and go, and play their parts, and vanish into the Eternal Silence.

Late in the afternoon, Miriam expressed a wish to see the old place again, and to visit her father's grave. She had put on her hat and gloves, and was standing in the hall; when she blushed faintly and said:

"There's one other circumstance I haven't mentioned as yet. And I suppose now you'll dismiss me at once."

The two good people looked inquiringly at her.

"I'm a Roman Catholic," said Miriam, simply. "My mother was one; alas! there was the cause of all our troubles. I was baptised in that faith, and have assumed it."

"There now, John Crosthwaite," said his wife, "there is the climax of iniquity. Shan't we turn her away now?"

"What do you say, my dear?" said the rector. "I didn't quite catch all that was said."

"Miriam is a Papist — a black Roman Catholic! Shall we turn her out?"

"No!" thundered the rector, in an attempted stentorian voice. "Not if she were an Orthodox Greek Catholic!"

"John Crosthwaite, what are you saying?" said his wife.

"I say, my dear," said the rector, trying to speak with awful determination, "that if our dear Miriam were an Abyssinian Catholic, or a Copt, or — or — or — a Nestorian, or a Eutychian, it would not make the slightest difference to us."

"John Crosthwaite," said his wife, "I'll have to report you for heresy."

"Do, my dear," said John Crosthwaite boldly, "Miriam is our own dear Miriam. And that is all we know, or care to know."

And the good man came over, and placed his withered hand on Miriam's arm. She stooped and kissed him.

"John Crosthwaite," said his wife, amidst her happy tears, "I'll report you to your bishop for heresy; and then, John Crosthwaite, I'll sue for a divorce. I will, indeed."

They went over to the village churchyard, where the remains of Edwin Lucas had been laid; and there by the newly-made grave, they knelt, and prayed in silence for the soul of him, who had known but little repose in life. And as they knelt, suddenly there broke out on the warm, sunny air, the mad, riotous ringing of the bell in the village chapel beneath them. It seemed to be pulled by some madman, who was trying to drag it from its sockets, so fiercely, so wildly, so madly, so recklessly the notes came tumbling out from the grey church-tower. And, instantly, as the tocsin continued its alarm-peal, or rather its welcome and joyous peal, a vast crowd rolled up from the village. The children, defying all discipline, had escaped from school; the old, leaving their fireside, came out into the open air to which they were very strangers, and feebly tottered along by the aid of heavy sticks. Men left their ploughs stuck in the furrows, and their harrows hanging above the brown and seeded earth; and the fishermen flung aside their nets which they were mending, although it meant the loss of a night's trawling on the high seas. And a great shout of welcome arose as they saw their new mistress once again; and then, in their Celtic way, they were hushed into a deep silence, when, instead of the usual white dress which Miriam wore, they recognised the sable garments of mourning, and all that it meant for her. And they insisted on shaking hands with her — great, horny, grimy hands, soft and tiny

children's hands, the withered claws of the old village crones, and the softer palms of young girls — all were gathered into her black gloves; and some of the people wept and some smiled, and all laughed, when an old farmer said:

"The war-chest is safe, Miss, and sound. Begor, there's enough to build another Glendarragh House!"

But he was instantly corrected: —

"Why should a new house be built? Sure, 'tis Miss Miriam will lift the Curse off the ould one!"

At which rejoinder, there was a ringing cheer.

"But," said the gentle rector, "I have to announce to you, my dear friends, that Miss Miriam is Miss Miriam no more; but Mrs. Hugh Ireton, wife of our local dispensary doctor."

Here again there was another cheer; and one said: —

"She'll always be Miss Miriam to us!"

And they cheered again.

"And in this," continued the old rector, beaming all over with smiles, "you will perceive the meaning of the words, which narrate the 'Uplifting of the Curse on Glendarragh': —

A maiden as white as the foam,
And as strong as the strength of the sea,
Shall welcome her bridegroom — a giver
Of life to the people is he.
Bearing health in his hands, and a love,
That is better than ruddiest gold,
Paid back by the love of his bride,
And the love of his people untold.

"There you see, everything is now accomplished; and happy days are dawning on Glendarragh."

That night bonfires blazed in the village, on the beach, and far along the cliffs to Poor Head; and the Coast-Guards at the latter station, who have not only to prevent smuggling, but to guard the interests of England, grew alarmed, not knowing but that Irish rebels were

signalling to hostile fleets off the coast. They were assured when they found that these were not Baal-Fires, nor Watch-Fires—only the outer and visible signs, told in the language of the ancient race, that a Queen had come back, and was reigning amongst her people; and that the Figure of a Fate that had been summoned by cruelty, and had been satiated with vengeance, had vanished from Glendarragh for ever!

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